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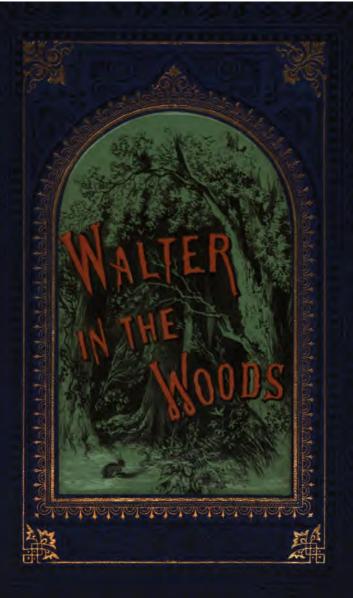
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THE SPRUCE FIR. Page 101.



1

WALTER IN THE WOODS;

OR,

THE TREES AND COMMON OBJECTS OF THE FOREST DESCRIBED AND ILLUSTRATED.

By

THE AUTHOR OF " WALTER AT THE SEA-SIDE," ETC.

Oh, I would not choose but go Into the woodlands hoar; Into the blithe and breathing air, Into the solemn wood! LONGFELLOW.



LONDON:

T. NELSON AND SONS, PATERNOSTER ROW: EDINBURGH; AND NEW YORK.

1870.





N the Series of which the present volume forms a part, it has been the writer's object to blend instruction with entertainment—the utile with the dulce. Many years have elapsed since Dr. Aikin and his sister composed their agreeable little narrative of "Eves and No Eyes;" yet its moral is one that requires to be constantly enforced upon the attention of parents and children. The secret of all knowledge may be defined as the right way of looking at things. But the young cannot be induced to look at things rightly if they are put before them in an unpleasant or distasteful form. They shrink from the "abstract;" they deal only with the "concrete." Therefore, in the following pages the writer has sought to give his facts an agreeable external dress; while bringing to the reader's notice a variety of details in reference to the trees of the forest, and the common objects of the woodland, he has endeavoured to clothe them in lively language, and to illustrate them by anecdote and quotation. It is his earnest desire to teach the young "to keep their eves open," and to observe with curious interest the evidences of Divine wisdom, power, and goodness which are accumulated around them. By so doing, they will learn to appreciate the sacred uses of human life, and in due time will understand the value and necessity of moral and intellectual culture.

Finally, the writer trusts that this volume, like its predecessor—which met with so cordial a reception both from Press and Public—will act as a stimulus and introduction to the study of Natural History,—that one of all the sciences which affords the most unalloyed gratification; which most clearly reveals to us the love and mercy, no less than the power and infinite foresight, of the Almighty Father; which forces from our souls the rapturous exclamation, "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all! The earth is full of Thy riches!"





CHAPTER I .-- IN THE NEW FOREST.

CHAPTER II .- THE BRAVE OLD OAK.

Going for a Walk—How to "Beguile the Way"—What may be seen if you keep your Eyes Open—Lessons upon Trees proposed—The Oak—Its Firmness and Tenacity—A Quotation from John Evelyn—Virgil's Description of the Oak—Its Width of Shade—Its two British Species—Stoney Cross—The Rufus Stone, and its Inscriptions—Did Tyrrel kill William Rufus?—A Tale told by an Old Chronicler—A Monk's Dream, and a King's Dream—The Arrow and the Stag—Malwood Keep—Tennyson's Talking Oak—Some Famous Trees—The Worksop Oak—Herne's Oak—the Cadenham Oak—A Groaning Tree—The Royal Oak, and its Memorials—At Home again.

CHAPTER III.—LEAFY AVENUES: THE LIME, THE CHESTNUT, THE ELM.

CHAPTER IV. -THE LADY BIRCH.

CHAPTER V .-- "BEECHEN GROVES."

CHAPTER VI .- THE CONIFERS.

CHAPTER VII .- GRAVEYARD TREES.

What are Graveyard Trees?-The Cypress-Ancient Customs-Durability of the Timber of the Cypress-The SYCAMORE-Its Handsome Appearance and Great Hardiness-Some Noble Specimens-A Sycamore in Cobham Park—Compared with the Wellingtonias of California—The YEW—A Grove of Yews at Norbury-Gilbert White and Selborne-Ancient Trees-The Crowhurst Yew an Epitome of English History-Two Famous Groups of Yews-Wordsworth's Poem on the Yews of Borrowdale-The Yews at Fountains Abbey-The Bows of the English Archers-Botanical Description of the Yew-Its Flowers and Fruit-Associations of Natural Objects -Commonplace Beauties little regarded-A Hedge of Sweet-Briar-Historical Souvenirs of the Dog-Rose-Historical Flowers-About the Violet -The Floral Games-The Pansy, or Heart's-Ease-Plantagenet and the Broom-The Forget-me-Not-Longfellow on Flowers-A Canopy of Leafiness-Character of a Tropical Forest-A Brazilian Landscape-The North American Forest-Strolling Homeward-The Bullfinch-Usefulness of Birds, and Common Ignorance about them-The Fairy Goldfinch and his Nest-Birds

CHAPTER VIII .- COMMON TREES.

Prospects of Departure—A Last Walk in the Forest—Common Trees—The Ash, and its Characteristics—The "Venus of the Forest"—The Wood of the Ash—Curious old Superstitions—The Mountain Ash—The POPLAR—The Aspen, a Species of Poplar—The PLANE—Its two Principal Varieties—The Oriental Plane—The Western Plane—Some Gigantic Trees—The Walnut—Beauty of its Wood—A German Custom—The Willow—Its Introduction into England—Its Varieties—The Alder, and its Foliage—The Larch—Its Native Country—Concluding Words: How to Learn—The Value of Knowledge.



WALTER IN THE WOODS.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE NEW FOREST.

Mighty trees,
In many a lazy syllable repeating
Their old poetic legends to the wind.—Longfellow.

HOSE of my readers who may have met with a little volume entitled "Walter at the Seaside," will, I hope, remember its two young heroes, Walter Somerville, and his cousin, Arthur Vernon.

In the book to which I refer, their holiday visit to the picturesque watering-place of Oldport was described, some of their conversations were recorded, and such information was given as might serve to show how easily and how agreeably visitors to the

sea-side may be entertained, if they will but keep their eyes open to the sights and scenes around them.

Walter learned much from Arthur Vernon during their brief companionship;—he learned to appreciate the wonders and beauties of God's creation; to trace the Divine handiwork in everything that lives and moves and has its being on the face of this Earth of ours; to regard nothing as trivial or useless; to count all time mis-spent which did not increase his mental and physical resources; and to find in the study of nature a pursuit which could never weary, and a pleasure which could never be exhausted.

Walter had learned so much from Arthur that his mother naturally wished him to learn more, and at his next vacation, when both of them were a year older, she invited Arthur to spend a few days with his cousin. She could not but be sensible of the good which a lad derives from the friendship of one who is sufficiently his senior to command respect, and yet not so much his senior as to forbid affection; whose mind has been carefully cultivated, whose heart beats with generous emotion, and whose character has been elevated and refined by a sincere and unaffected piety. In Arthur Vernon she knew that her son would find just such a companion. She knew that he would benefit incalculably by close and sympathetic intercourse with a youth so noble.

so gentle, and so truthful; whose reading was so varied, and whose understanding so fully developed.

Mrs. Somerville had chosen for her summer retreat a picturesque little villa, or cottage ornée, in the vicinity of the delightful town of Lyndhurst; which town, as everybody knows, or ought to know, is the "capital" of the New Forest. From the drawingroom window a beautiful prospect was commanded of masses of foliage rising upon gentle acclivities, or dipping into bowery hollows; of long shadowy avenues, like the dim aisles of a Gothic cathedral; of outlying clumps of venerable trees, which showed against the serried ranks of the young plantations, like the patriarchs of a village compared with its blithesome youth and vigorous manhood. The library window, at the back, looked across a cultivated country to the blue waters of the Solent, and the swelling downs of the Isle of Wight. In truth, the view in every direction was calculated to please an artistic eye, and to stimulate a lively imagination. It possessed a rich variety of graceful and romantic forms, and was replete with every phantasy of colour. Associated, moreover, as it so abundantly is, with stirring memories of the historic past, when in

> " the fair foreste Amang the levis grene,"

our kings hunted the deer; and of pleasanter reminiscences of poets and artists who have celebrated

its sylvan beauties, it could not fail to awaken the most vivid interest in every cultivated mind.

Walter and his cousin enjoyed a genuine holiday in this lovely neighbourhood. They were never weary of examining its attractions, and in truth each morning suggested to them something new. it possible ever to grow dull, ever to feel sick at heart and fatigued of soul, in the "merry green-Is there not sweet music in the murmur ' wood "? of the leaves, and a voice in the air which awakens the quickest impulses of the soul? Does not that wealth of harmonious colour, that play of light and shade, which converts each avenue and dell into a bit of fairyland, suggest the brightest and most pleasant fancies? At one time the attention is caught by the sweeping shadows of the long eëry branches, which wave to and fro like the arms of a phantom host; at another, the brown hare suddenly starts from its covert behind a thicket of brier and bramble; at another, it is the nimble squirrel gliding up the gnarled bole of a venerable oak; and now it is the mavis, wheeling from tree to tree, and pouring out its full heart, as it flies, in unpremeditated song. You may hear afar off the ripple of the stream, eddying and whirling over a bed of pebble; and close at hand the singing of a grasshopper, happy, as all nature is happy, in the sunny noon. But not at noon alone is the greenwood

merry. It is merry at early morn, when the birds "with one consent" salute the rising king of day;



THE MAVIS.

it is merry at glowing sunset, when the trunks of the trees shine like pillars of burnished gold. It is always merry, and mirthful, and suggestive of indescribable happiness, except at night, when the pale moon touches each leaf, and bough, and blade of grass with her magical finger, and a radiance spreads over the whole which is not like the radiance of silver, but a glory beyond the power of words, and which, therefore, saddens the attentive spirit, one knows not why, and hushes the very birds into silence.

The silence of the wood is one of its principal characteristics. Despite the melodies of birds and the voice of waters, it is always silent; but the silence is not that of regret or suffering, rather it resembles the forced calm of a heart too full to speak. I know there lies so exquisite a pleasure in it, that I have often spent hours and hours "under the melancholy boughs" for the mere pleasure of enjoying it. The few occasional sounds only serve to render it deeper, as the discord in a strain of music enhances the sweetness of the following harmony. How this silence elevates and purifies the soul! How it seems to separate us from the turbulence and tumult of our daily life! It is at such moments that one seems to hear the sweet voices of the angels, the melodies of Heaven; and our thoughts rise far above the anxieties and pursuits of the world, to dwell in a purer atmosphere and rest upon higher objects. For this reason the poet exclaims:-

"If thou art worn, and hard beset
With sorrows that thou wouldst forget;
If thou wouldst read a lesson, that will keep
Thy heart from fainting and thy soul from sleep,
Go to the woods!"

For not only is there silence in their leafy shades, but solitude; and a solitude which, like the silence, seems complete. You are haunted no longer by the presence of the cares, and petty aims, and vulgar objects of your everyday existence; you are alone,

except for the invisible company of departed spirits; and the beauty and the mystery around you appeal with irresistible force to your better feelings, to that nobler part of your being which is seldom able to make itself heard or felt during your struggle with a commonplace world.

But I am wandering away from Walter and his cousin, and from the green glades in which they spent their happy hours. Before we accompany them in their wanderings, however, a brief description seems necessary of the particular wood to which their footsteps were directed, and which, though now eight hundred years of age, is still called the *New* Forest.

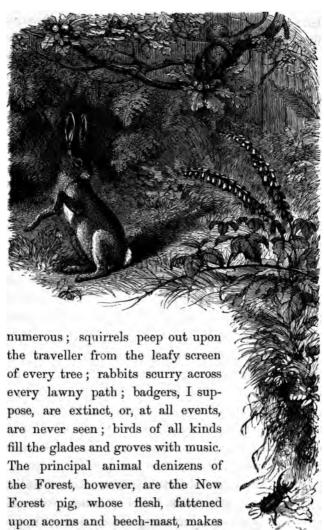
I suppose every one of my readers will know who made it, and when it was made. But lest there should be any wanting in this knowledge, I may as well state that it was formed by William the Conqueror, in 1079—just thirteen years after the Battle of Senlac, or Hastings. The old story was wont to represent its formation as a special instance of the great king's cruelty; but old stories are not always true. Thus it was said, that in order to extend the boundaries of his chase he swept away farms, and fertile fields, and villages, and manors, and chapels, and fifty parish churches. All this can be proved to be false. The soil and character of the New

Forest abundantly show that the district can never have been cultivated to any considerable extent, if at all; and as for the devastated churches, it is sufficient to say that not a trace of their foundations has ever been discovered. The only two New Forest churches mentioned in the famous Domesday Record are those of Brockenhurst and Milford; and both of these, with their beautiful Norman architecture, still remain.

But the formation of the Forest was no doubt attended with some individual suffering, chiefly arising from the cruel forest laws of the Normans. In those laws the life of a man was valued at less than the life of a stag; and any trespass in the Forest, or any injury to its game, was punished with merciless severity. This may account for the part which the New Forest plays in the legends and traditions of the chroniclers; and the violent deaths of the Conqueror's two sons-William Rufus and Richard—served undoubtedly to increase the superstitious terror with which it was regarded. Ιn course of time their deaths were represented as the Divine judgment on the cruel Norman king, and all kinds of vague fancies and ancient fables began to spring into life in connection with the Forest, which was supposed to be the favourite haunt of evil spirits -of demons and goblins-so that the boldest would not venture into its avenues after dark.

The New Forest is now-a-days much reduced in Formerly, the entire country between the river Avon, the Southampton Water, and the Wiltshire border was covered with wood-the "Natan Leaga" and "Ytene" of the Saxons; but large portions have come under the hand of the cultivator. and, at present, its boundaries are defined by a triangle drawn from Calshot Castle on the east; the Black Hill, in Wilts, north-west; and Darley Chine, near Poole, on the south-west. By some authorities the most picturesque part is supposed to be that which lies about the Beaulieu river. But there is beauty everywhere for those who love the grassy lawn, the wide-spreading oak, the ferny dell, the solemn avenue, and the murmuring brook. A constant succession of charming sylvan pictures delights the wayfarer in whatever direction he penetrates. The best plan, as a recent writer advises, is to follow the course of one of the streams, make it your friend and companion, and go wherever it goes. It will be sure to take you through the greenest valleys, and past the thickest woods, and under the largest trees. No step along with it is ever lost, for it never goes out of its way but in search of some fresh beauty.

Animal life in the New Forest is not very varied. There are a few fallow deer-perhaps about one hundred-but no red deer; foxes, however, are (249)



delicious pork; and the New Forest pony, a diminutive breed of great strength and agility.

If there is no great variety of animal life, there is, at least, an abundance of vegetable. Ferns and wild-flowers attract the eye by their beauty; and the most enthusiastic botanist may find ample employment in every glade and dell. Some of the blossoms are rarely met with in other parts of England; choice darlings are they, the favourites of the Spirit of the Forest, who nestle contentedly in its most silent and remote recesses. And not only the botanist, but the geologist, may find much to interest and absorb him; while for the artist the wealth of woodland pictures is inexhaustible, and he may fill his sketch-book at his pleasure with transcripts of romantic and picturesque scenes which exceed in freshness of beauty the finest imaginations of the poet.

This brief introduction may fitly conclude with a picture sketched by the practised hand of Mr. Howitt:—"I roved onward," he says, "without a guide, through the wildest woods that came in my way. Awaking, as from a dream, I saw far around me one deep shadow, one thick and continuous roof of boughs, and thousands of hoary boles standing clothed, as it were, with the very spirit of silence. I admired the magnificent sweep of some grand old trees, as they hung into a glade or ravine; some



delicious opening in the deep woods, or the grotesque figure of particular trees, which seemed to have been blasted into blackness, and contorted into inimitable crookedness, by the savage genius of the place."



CHAPTER II.

THE BRAVE OLD OAK.

The builder oak, sole king of forest all .- SPENSER.

As when, upon a tranced summer night,
Those green-robed senators of mighty woods,
Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
Save from one gradual solitary gust
Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
As if the ebbing air had but one wave.—KEATS.

HERE shall we go to-day?" said Walter Somerville to his cousin, one bright, fresh summer morning, as the two, with well-filled knapsack slung across the shoulder, opened the garden gate and struck across the country towards the Forest.

"Our course lies north-west," replied Arthur Vernon; "I am bound for Stoney Cross, and the monument of William Rufus."

"Capital!" exclaimed Walter; "but I don't like a long walk, unless a pleasant chat helps my legs a

little. Pray, tell me what there is to see at Stoney Cross?"

"Why, the gray old stone which professes to indicate the scene of William the Second's death—the 'death-spot'—

'Of that Red King, who, while of old Through Boldrewood the chase he led, By his loved huntsman's arrow bled.'

But I will tell you all about Stoney Cross, and Mallwood Castle, which lies at no great distance, when we arrive there. On our road, let us take up some other subject."

"So be it; any subject you like, so that it beguiles the weary way."

"A weary way, do you call it! Look at the glorious trees on either side of you, with their gnarled trunks and waving branches clothed with the warm glory of the sunshine! Look at the glimpses of clear blue sky which you catch through the openings in their foliage, like peeps of Heaven in a noonday dream! Look at the exquisite pink and white roses which cluster around the brier and bramble in each little shady hollow! Look at the deep emerald masses of ivy which infold so many of the more venerable trunks, or creep along the sward in ever accumulating profusion! And see, there goes a squirrel, springing from bough to bough with more than the grace and nimbleness of

a Blondin; and yonder, at the mouth of his burrow, sits a meditative rabbit, much wondering, I doubt



not, at our intrusion on his domain. A weary way, you call it!"

"Well, you know, Arthur, I am not so poetically inclined as you are. Besides, I don't see the variety of things which always seem to catch *your* eye."

"Just, as I remember telling you last year, because you don't look in the right way. Do you see yon grand old oak? There is matter enough in a tree like that to occupy your mind with thoughts and fancies for a whole day. Come, I gave you at Oldport some lessons in Zoology; here at Lyndhurst we might take up Botany. Suppose we discuss the properties and characteristics of our British trees."

"Good, very good, Arthur; I am not sure that I could tell an ash from an elm, if I were asked; and I am ashamed to say I know nothing about the nature of either."

"Well, we will begin with the lord of the forest, the OAK, which from the remotest antiquity has been the favourite English tree. I shall have time, before we reach Stoney Cross, to give you something like a tolerable account of Tennyson's 'solemn oaktree,' which 'sigheth'—

'Thick-leaved, ambrosial, With an ancient melody Of an inward agony.'

Having been the tree of which our 'wooden walls' were principally built, it has naturally become the object of the love and admiration of Englishmen; and between our solid, defiant, re-

solute English character, and its massive, firm, and permanent timber, something of a resemblance has always been traced. And observe that the oak is not only useful, but beautiful, as, indeed, all truly useful things must necessarily be.

"A peculiar feature of the oak is its firmness. No other tree opposes so bold a front to the gale. Its roots strike deep, and thus it stands erect and secure, like the Christian who, in the confidence of his faith, confronts the storms of the world undaunted. You will seldom see the oak bent and bowed by the winds; it retains its uprightness in the most exposed situations, and, like a just ruler, always preserves its balance.

"Another characteristic is the tenacity of its timber. Shakspeare calls it 'the unwedgeable and gnarled oak;' and its wood is distinguished from that of all other trees by its combined hardness and toughness. Box wood is harder, but then it is not so tough; ash wood is tougher, but then it is not so hard. The best proof of its excellence is, that, after having been in use for centuries in buildings and other works of ancient date, it has been found perfectly sound and uncorrupted."

"On this point," said Arthur, drawing a small book from his coat pocket, "let me read to you a quotation from a favourite author of mine, quaint old John Evelyn:—

"'To enumerate the incomparable uses of this wood were needless; but so precious was the esteem of it, that of old there was an express law among the twelve tables [of Rome] concerning the very gathering of the very acorns, though they should be found fallen into another man's ground. The



THE OAK.

land and the sea do sufficiently speak for the improvement of this excellent material: houses and ships, cities and navies, are built with it; and there is a kind of it so tough, and extremely compact, that our sharpest tools will hardly enter it, as scarcely the very fire itself, in which it consumes but slowly, as seeming to partake of a ferruginous

and metalline shining nature, proper for sundry robust uses."

"How fond you are of old books, Arthur!" exclaimed Walter Somerville.

"Books, if they are good, like good wine, are the better for keeping.

"But I have to point out yet another characteristic of this noble tree—the stoutness of its limbs. I recollect Virgil's reference in the Georgics, which you were studying last session, to its 'fortes ramos.'* In fact, they excel in this respect the branches of all other trees; they don't spring from the trunk, like those of the ash or elm, but divide from it; so that they seem so many separate stems."

"Talking of the branches," interrupted Walter,

* We may here subjoin Virgil's description of the oak :-

"Esculus imprimis, quæ, quantum vertice ad auras Ætherias, tantum radice in Tartara tondit.
Ergo non hiemes illam, non flabra, neque imbres
Convellunt; immota manet, multosque per annos
Multa virûm volvens durando sæcula vincit:
Tum fortes late ramos et brachia tendens
Huc illuc, media ipsa ingentem sustinet umbram."

Thus Englished by Dryden :---

That holds the woods in awful sovereignty,
Requires a depth of lodging in the ground;
And, next the lower skies, a bed profound;
High as his topmost boughs to Heaven ascend,
So low his roots to Hell's dominion tend.
Therefore, nor winds nor winter's rage o'erthrows
His bulky body, but unmoved he grows.
For length of ages lasts his happy reign,
And lives of mortal man contend in vain.
Full in the midst of his own strength he stands,
Stretching his brawny arms, and leafy hands;
His shade protects the plains, his head the hills commands.*

"I always know the oak by the curious way in which they are twisted."

"Yes; it is easy enough to recognize it from this one particular, for its boughs certainly assume every. conceivable variety of shape. But not less remarkable is its width of shade. These contorted and involved branches spread horizontally over a very large space, so that it checks the growth of any other tree, and becomes the monarch of all it surveys. To this peculiarity much of its picturesqueness of aspect is due: hence it derives its bold and majestic character; and hence, in the vigour of its prime, it claims our admiration as one of the grandest things in nature. It seems suited to every kind of landscape, and is equally noble whether it stands on the brink of a weather-beaten crag, above the foam and spray of a tumbling torrent; whether, in solitary grandeur, it crowns the summit of some lofty hill; whether it spreads its leafy arms over a dimpling pool, as if to contemplate

'Its reverend image in the expanse below;'
or whether it dignifies with its shadow the ruins of
an ancient Gothic arch."

- "How many kinds of oaks are there, Arthur?"
- "About one hundred and fifty different species."
- "One hundred and fifty! What! are there one hundred and fifty species in this forest?"
 - "No, indeed, nor in all Great Britain. The

species indigenous—that is, native—to our island are only two—the common or pedunculated oak (Quercus robur pedunculata), and the sessile-fruited oak (Quercus robur sessileflora). In the former the acorns grow upon short stems, or, as it is termed, pedunculated; in the other, they are without these stems, or are sessile. In the former the leaves have





ACORNS OF PEDUNCULATED OAK.

ACORNS OF SESSILE PRUITED OAK.

no stem; in the latter they have a short stem. In other respects the two species closely resemble one another.

"But here we are at Stoney Cross. So we will adjourn our conversation respecting the oak until we return home, where I can read to you some interesting details from various authorities. Meantime, please to repeat the chief characteristics which distinguish the oak from other trees."

"Let me see,—oh! its firmness; the tenacity of its timber; the stoutness of its limbs; and the extent to which they spread."

"Very good, Walter. And now let us rest a minute or two. The scene is a pleasant one; a



sweet sequestered valley, watered, as you see, by a bright, sweet, rippling brook; and in various

directions skirted by clumps of trees, through which we obtain the most delicious glimpses of far-winding avenues of greensward. What says the inscription on yonder triangular monument?"

- "There are four inscriptions on one side. The first reads thus:—
- "'Here stood the oak tree, on which an arrow, shot by Sir Walter Tyrrel at a stag, glanced, and struck King William II., surnamed Rufus, in the breast, of which stroke he instantly died, on the second of August 1100.'
 - "Now for the second:—
- "' King William II., being thus slain, was laid on a cart belonging to one Purkess, and drawn from hence to Winchester, and buried in the cathedral church of that city.'
 - "And now for the third: —
- "That the spot where an event so memorable happened might not hereafter be unknown, this stone was set up by John Lord Delaware, who had seen the tree growing in this place, anno 1745."
 - "Paragraph fourth and last:-
- "'This stone having been much mutilated, and the inscriptions on the three sides defaced, this more durable memorial [of iron], with the original inscriptions, was erected in the year 1841, by William Sturges Bourne, warden.'
- "So this is the spot where the Red King met his death from Tyrrel's arrow."
- "Yes; and the cottage where lived the charcoalburner, Purkess, whose cart conveyed the king's dead body to Winchester, stood a short distance lower down, on the road to Minstead. Some of his

descendants, I believe, still live in that little town.

'And still—so runs our forest craed—
Flourish the pious yeoman's seed,
E'en in the self-same spot:
One horse and cart their little store,
Like their forefather's—neither more
Nor less the children's lot.'"

"Is it really true that Tyrrel killed King Rufus?"

"It is more than doubtful. All that can really be said is, that he was killed by an arrow in the New Forest, and that his followers abandoned his body, which was afterwards buried in haste and secrecy at Winchester. But we do not know whether the arrow was accidentally discharged by Tyrrel, or some other hunter; or designedly by Tyrrel, or by any discontented Saxon, lurking in the thick covert of tree and bush."

Leaving Walter and Arthur to continue their interesting discussion, we may here recite, for the entertainment of the reader, the account of the Red King's death given by Matthew Paris in his History.

"Now the king, on the day preceding his death, dreamed a dream; and lo, he felt as if smitten with a javelin, and that forthwith there issued from the wound a stream of blood, which sprung up even to the sky, beclouded the sun, and extinguished the

light of day. Starting from his slumbers, he invoked the blessed Virgin, and calling for a lamp, he bade his chamberlains stay by him, and so, sleepless, spent the remainder of the night.

"And when the morning dawned, a certain monk from across the seas, who sought an audience of the monarch, respecting divers affairs of the Church, related unto one Robert Fitz-Hamon, a man of great power, and very familiar with the king, a vision which had troubled his rest, and was truly very marvellous and terrible:—'As I slumbered,' said the monk, 'methought I saw the king enter a church, with proud step, and haughty, as is his wont, and gazing contemptuously on those around Then, seizing the crucifix with his teeth, he gnawed off its arms, and left it scarce a single limb. And when, for some time, the crucifix had this endured, at length with its right foot it so spurned the monarch, that he fell prostrate on the pavement; and then, as he lay, from his mouth leapt forth a flame, and it spread around, and a cloudy smoke like chaos went upwards to the stars.'

"When Robert Fitz-Hamon repeated this vision to the king, he laughed loudly, saying, 'Here is a monk who hath dreamed, monk-wise, for his own profit. Give him a hundred shillings, that he may see he hath not dreamed in vain.'

"Then, on the night before his death, there came

yet another dream unto the king. He saw upon a certain altar an infant of exceeding beauty; and hungering and desiring beyond limit, he went and took a mouthful of his flesh, and it seemed very good to him even while he ate it. But when he sought to satisfy himself again, the child, with stern aspect and threatening voice, exclaimed, 'Forbear; thou hast already taken too much.' Whereupon, suddenly waking, he asked a certain bishop the interpretation of his dream. And the bishop, suspecting that some retribution was near at hand, said unto him, 'Cease, O king, to persecute the Church; for this is a warning from on high, and a gentle premonition. Go not forth, as thou didst purpose, unto the chase to-day.'

"The king, despising this wholesome counsel, went forth into the woods to hunt. And lo, it happened that as an immense stag passed him, he said to a certain knight, named Walter Tyrrel, 'Draw, devil!' Then the swift arrow fled from the bow, even as the poet hath expressed it,—

'And once outsped, it flies beyond recall;'

and glancing against a neighbouring tree, turned aside, and pierced the heart of King William, who fell suddenly dead. And his attendants and the unhappy knight immediately fled away. But some, returning, took up the body, all cold and wet with

blood, and placed it in the light cart of a charcoalburner, drawn by a very lean mule. And they forced the rustic to bear it towards the city, when, as he passed through a miry lane, the cart broke down, and the corpse was hurled into the mire. So he left it for others, if they would, to carry it further.

"About the same hour the Earl of Cornwall, hunting in a wood about two days' journey from the spot where this dread event took place, strayed from his companions, and saw, to his wild amaze, an immense swarthy stag bearing away the king's body, all black and miry, and wounded in the breast. Then he adjured the stag, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to declare the meaning of this fearful thing.

"'I bear to judgment,' said he, 'your monarch, even the tyrant, William the Red. I am an evil spirit, and the avenger of the wickedness which he did to Christ's holy Church; and I wrought this tragedy at the command of the proto-martyr* of England, even the blessed Alban, who complained unto Heaven, because in the land which he had consecrated there should be such woe.'

"So the earl went away, and told his companions what had occurred; and within three days they found that all these things were true, being informed thereof by faithful witnesses."

^{*} That is, the first martyr.

Such is the story told by Matthew Paris—improbable enough, and, in some respects, absurd enough, but interesting as a proof of the popular feeling in reference to the Red King's death.

After examining all the beauties of the sweet Arcadia which blooms and brightens about Stoney Cross, Walter and his cousin paid a visit to the site of Malwood Keep, the Norman castle where William Rufus spent the night before his death. It occupied a kind of knoll or promontory, which commands on the one side, as Bramble Hill does on the other, a grand natural avenue or vista of extraordinary magnificence. "Between these two promontories the eye is conducted from wood to wood, over lawns and heaths, through every shade of perspective, till all distinction at length is lost, and the eye doubts whether it is still roving over the tufted woods of the forest, or is landed upon the distant shores of the Isle of Wight, or is wandering among the hazy streaks of the horizon."

Enjoying this splendid prospect, the two lads took their al fresco luncheon, and afterwards proceeded on their homeward journey, by way of Minstead. They followed, however, no exact and rigid path, but wandered in and out of thorny brake and ferny dell, and traced the course of many a little stream, and deviated through apparently interminable

arcades, so that when they reached their home, "twilight gray" was gradually drawing its mysterious veil over the deepening sky, and both wayfarers were footsore and weary.

After refreshing themselves with copious ablutions, and joining Mrs. Somerville at dinner, they retired to the drawing - room, where, at Walter's request, Arthur resumed his lecture on the oak.

"I ought to mention," he said, "among the remarkable features or characteristics of the oak, its longevity. A single tree will live through the history of a nation. As man counts his life by years, the oak counts its life by centuries. At a hundred years old, it is a sapling; at five hundred, it reaches maturity; it does not enter upon old age until six hundred. In Tennyson's 'Talking Oak' these facts are embalmed in beautiful verse. Thus, the 'broad oak of Sumner-chase' is represented as saying, what is true enough of many a tree in England,—

"'O Walter, I have sheltered here
Whatever maiden grace
The good old summers, year by year,
Made ripe in Sumner-chase:

" 'Old summers, when the monk was fat, And, issuing shorn and sleek, Would twist his girdle tight, and pat The girls upon the cheek;

- "' And I have seen some score of those
 Fresh faces, that would thrive
 When his [Bluff Hal's] man-minded offset * rose
 To chase the deer at five;
- " ' And all that from the town would stroll,
 Till that wild wind made work
 In which the gloomy brewer's soul
 Went by me,† like a stork;
- " 'And I have shadowed many a group
 Of beauties, that were born
 In tea-cup times of hood and hoop,
 Or while the patch was worn;
- "' And, leg and arm with love-knots gay,
 About me leaped and laughed
 The modish Cupid of the day,
 And shrilled his tinselled shaft.

"At Donnington Castle, near Newbury, flourished some famous oaks, which were tall trees in the days of Chaucer, and lived long after the Civil Wars. One was called the King's Oak, and carried an erect stem of fifty feet. Close to the water walk of Magdalen College, Oxford, grew an oak, which was called the Great Oak when the college was founded by William of Waynflete, Bishop of Winchester; and which, after undergoing many vicissitudes, fell to the ground in 1788. It must have been a glorious tree, Walter! We are told that its boughs extended nearly fifty feet on every side of its trunk,

^{*} Queen Elizabeth, daughter of Henry VIII.

[†] Alluding to the great storm that blew on the night when Cromwell died. His father was wrongly represented by the royalist writers to have been a brewer.

and that under its vast roof of foliage three thousand men could have been easily sheltered."

"Oh, what a tree, Arthur! There is none to equal it in the New Forest!"

"There was a celebrated oak near Worksop; I am not sure but what it may be called a worthy rival to the one last described. It overspread a space of ninety feet from the extremities of the opposite boughs; so that a regiment of horse might have been drawn up under it. The dignity of its station

was equal, it may be said, to the dignity of its aspect, for it stood on a spot which united the three counties of York, Nottingham, and Derby, and flung its shade into each.

"Amongst celebrated trees," continued Arthur, "you would not like me to omit Herne's Oak, in



HERNE'S OAK.

Windsor Forest. You know the passage in Shak-speare which has made it celebrated:—

"' An old tale goes that Herne the hunter, Some time a keeper here in Windsor Forest, Doth all the winter time, at still of midnight, Walk round about this oak, with ragged horns; And then he blasts the trees, destroys the cattle, Makes the milch-cow yield blood, and shakes a chain In hideous, dreadful manner.'"

"Oh, that occurs in the 'Midsummer-Night's Dream!' It was under this oak fat old Falstaff was pinched and tricked by the pretended fairies."

"Yes; and therefore the tree was for many years preserved with sedulous care. It was a large tree, measuring twenty-four feet in circumference, and flourished until late in the reign of George III., when it was destroyed by a great storm."

"Can you tell me of any other remarkable oaks? The gardener here was speaking of one at Cadenham; a village, he said, about three miles from Lyndhurst."

"Yes; that is—or rather was—the famous Cadenham Oak, which put forth its leaves in mid-winter. According to the popular belief, it became gay with young leaves and green shoots on the 5th of January (old Christmas-day). It was thought, like the Glastonbury Thorn, to do homage to the holy season, being entirely bare and leafless both before and after that particular day. Undoubtedly, it did vegetate thus early; but then it is equally certain that though these first shoots appear, and the leaves unfold, for some weeks in dreary winter time, they

subsequently drop off, or the frost withers them, and when the spring comes the tree puts on its usual green apparel. The Cadenham Oak was one of the boundary trees of the Forest, and was in existence up to the beginning of the present century.

"But what do you think of a groaning tree?"

"I should as soon think of a crying moon," replied Walter. "Yet I don't know why there should not be *groaning* oaks when there are weeping willows!"

"Not so bad, Walter. But a groaning oak there was, and at no great distance from this town. Please hand me over yonder volume of Gilpin's 'Forest Scenery.' And now, listen:—

"'The Groaning Tree was situated at Baddesley, a village about two miles from Lymington. Its history is this: About forty years ago, a cottager who lived near the centre of the village heard frequently a strange noise behind his house, like that of a person in extreme agony. Soon after, it caught the attention of his wife, who was then confined to her bed. She was a timorous woman, and being greatly alarmed, her husband endeavoured to persuade her that the noise she heard was only the bellowing of the stags in the forest. By degrees, however, the neighbours on all sides heard it, and the thing began to be much talked of. It was by this time plainly discovered that the groaning noise

proceeded from an oak which grew at the end of the garden. It was a young, vigorous tree, and to all appearance perfectly sound.

"'In a few weeks the fame of the groaning tree was spread far and wide, and people from all parts flocked to hear it. Among others, it attracted the curiosity of the late Prince and Princess of Wales (the parents of George III.), who resided at that time, for the advantage of a sea-bath, at Pilewell, the seat of Sir James Worsley, which stood within a quarter of a mile of the groaning tree.

"'Though the country people assigned many superstitious causes for this strange phenomenon, the naturalist could assign no physical one that was in any degree satisfactory. Some thought it was owing to the twisting and friction of the roots; others thought it proceeded from water which had collected in the body of the tree, or perhaps from pent-up air; but no cause that was alleged appeared equal to the effect. In the meantime, the tree did not always groan, sometimes disappointing its visitants: yet no cause could be assigned for its temporary cessations, either from seasons or weather. If any difference was observed, it was thought to groan least when the weather was wet, and most when it was clear and frosty; but the sound at all times seemed to arise from the root.'

"This curious phenomenon lasted for a year and

a half; when a hole was bored in its trunk, and the groaning ceased."

"Well, that was a jolly remarkable tree, Mr. Arthur; I should have liked very much to have heard its groaning. But come, I say, Arthur; you are not going to forget, amongst all your oaks and hoaxes—"

"Fie, Walter! A pun so old and so bad is intolerable, and not to be endured!"

"Well, you won't forget the oak whose branches sheltered Charles the Second?"

"The Royal Oak, as it was called? Certainly not. It was situated, as I suppose you know, near Boscobel House, on the borders of Staffordshire. Charles the Second, then Prince Charles, after the defeat of his Scottish army at Worcester, in September 3, 1651, determined to ride along the west of England into Scotland. But on Kniver Heath his guide lost the way, and in the perplexity which ensued, one of Charles's attendants, named Gifford, undertook to conduct him to his own house of Boscobel,* where he would provide him with an asylum.

"Boscobel was then inhabited by an honest peasant family, named Penderel, who waited upon the prince with the utmost fidelity.

^{*} So called by Gifford in allusion to its situation in "a fair wood;" that is, Bosco Bello (Ital.)

"But Charles, soon growing weary of the seclusion, and being anxious to make towards London, resolved on setting forth a-foot, 'in a country fellow's habit, with a pair of ordinary gray cloth breeches, a leathern doublet, and green jerkin, attended by no one but 'trusty Dick Penderel.' They had got no further, however, than the edge of the wood, when the appearance of a troop of the Parliament's cavalry compelled them to lie close all day in a drenching rain. At midnight they resumed their journey, but only to incur such risks, and meet with so many obstacles, that they were compelled to return to Boscobel. Here they found Colonel William Careless, a gallant and devoted Cavalier. Being Sunday, Charles kept in the house, or amused himself by reading in a retired arbour; and the next day, listening to the colonel's advice, he got up 'into a great oak, in a pretty plain place,' where he could see all around him. It was 'a great oak, which had been lopped some three or four years before, and being grown out again very bushy and thick, could not be seen through.'

"In this leafy covert Charles and the colonel stayed the whole day, being provided with some bread and cheese, and small beer; and the colonel placing a pillow on his knees, that the prince might rest his head upon it, as he sat among the branches.

While thus concealed, he saw many Roundhead soldiers beating the woods in quest of fugitives.



CHARLES HIDING IN THE OAK.

"The following night Charles left Boscobel for Mosely; the day afterwards he went to Bentley; from thence he rode towards Bristol; but a succession of misadventures forced him to change his plans, and he finally proceeded to Shoreham, in Sussex. There he obtained a vessel, which carried him across to Fécamp, in Normandy."

"So much for King Charles!" cried Walter; "but what became of the Royal Oak? Is it standing still?"

"No, but it might have been, but for the injuries inflicted by fanatical loyalists, who literally carried

it off in fragments. It was visited by a celebrated antiquary, Dr. Stukely, in the early part of the last century, and was then surrounded by a brick wall, the inside whereof was covered with laurel. Over the door of the enclosure a marble tablet bore an inscription in Latin, which I will read to you, and which, I hope, you will translate for your own edification."

- "Oh, bother the Latin!"
- "Here it is :-
- "'Felicissimam arborem, quam in asylum potentissimi Regis Caroli II. Deus O. M., per quem reges regnant, hic crescere voluit, tam in perpetuam rei tantæ memoriam, quam specimen firmæ in reges fidei, muro cinctam posteris commendârunt Basilico et fana Fitzherbert.

'Quercus amica Jovi.'"

"That sounds very fine, and I suppose I must get at the English of it by-and-by. But are there no remains of the old tree extant?"

"Two trees were planted by Charles II., from acorns of the Boscobel oak, in Hyde Park, near the powder magazine. They were both blighted in a terrible frost some few years since. One of them was then entirely removed; but the stem and a few branches of the other still exist, richly covered with ivy, and protected by an iron fence. A fragment of the old original oak, turned into the form of a

salver, was given by Mrs. Letitia Lane—one of a family who largely assisted Charles in his escape—to the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and is there preserved.

"But, hark! I hear the bell for tea."

"Yes, Arthur; cum me ad te! Don't shake your head; a bad pun is allowable in holiday-time.—But, I say, old fellow, I have learned a good deal to-day, which I hope I shall not forget; and I hope you will be kind enough to resume your lectures to-morrow."

"That I shall do with pleasure, Walter. Put away the books; we must not keep Aunt Somerville waiting."





CHAPTER III.

LEAFY AVENUES: THE LIME, THE CHESTNUT, THE ELM.

Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon For simple sheep.—Keats.

The chestnuts near, that hung In masses thick with milky cones.—Tennyson.

And all about the large lime-feathers low,—
The lime, a summer home of murmurous wings.—Tennyson.

Enormous elm-tree boles did stoop and lean
Upon the dusky brushwood underneath.
Their broad curved branches, fledged with clearest green,
Peer from its silken sheath.—TENNYSON.

reposing themselves, next day at noon, was one of indescribable loveliness. And, in truth, we ever and anon come across a landscape whose charm is of so subtle a character that no words can adequately define it. Not even the brush of the artist can realize its vague ineffable sentiment of beauty—the aerial something which we feel, but cannot express. And

so with the sylvan picture that glowed before the eyes of our heroes. What shall we say of it? That on a circular sweep of lawn, green with the rains of many Aprils, and fragrant with the odours of many Mays. twelve avenues opened; twelve noble pillared aisles, whose overhanging branches formed in each a natural dome or arch of exceeding magnificence. That through the gaps in the clustering foliage the sunlight shot in diagonal shafts (so to speak) of varying dimensions, which touched the leaves with ruddy gold, and each trunk and stem with a burnished splendour. occasionally, as a fleecy cloud rapidly swept over the azure vault of heaven, its passage was reflected on the sward by as swiftly a retiring shadow. That deep about the ancient trees lay the rich spoils of successive winters, fertilizing the soil for future tillage. That a soft air glided down each avenue, growing more and more subdued as it approached the central amphitheatre, where it melted into a sort of hush. sweet as a young mother's lullaby over her firstborn. And yet, when we have said thus much, how far are we still from having embodied the true beauty of our miniature Arcadia! We cannot convey the intoxicating sense of happiness and music and dreamy meditation which invested it with its most powerful influence; we have but sketched the dull outline of a picture whose rich harmonies were filled in by a Divine Hand!



After a long silence, Arthur exclaimed:—
"I do so love these noble avenues! I think the

Tree is never so impressive as when forming a component part of them. They fill the mind, moreover, with all kinds of pleasant fancies and associations. Cannot you imagine a dance of fairies frolicking down yonder fragrant lane of limes? Or that avenue of elms—is it not just the place to be haunted at night by witch and goblin? Consider, too, that it would seem to have suggested to the early architects the idea of the Gothic arch. In the close recesses of the beechen grove, as I remember to have read, we find this idea most complete. The lofty narrow aisle—the pointed arch—the clustered pillar, whose parts, separating without violence, diverge gradually to form the fretted roof,—find there perhaps their earliest archetype. Again: the still and lonely avenue seems just the fitting place for meditation. You can walk to and fro without let or hindrance, while the mind indulges in copious reflec-So says Cowper, if I remember rightly: tion.

'Meditation here
May think down hours to moments. Here the heart
May give a useful lesson to the head;
And learning wiser grow without its books.'"

"Well, Arthur, I am sure you can want no books, for your head seems crammed with quotations. And yet, I saw you put a little volume in your pocket before we started this morning."

"Yes; a delightful little green octavo volume,

which contains more genuine poetry than many a more pretentious tome."

"Poetry! Whose is it?"

"Thomas Hood's; that fine, delicate, and tender spirit, whose exuberant wit has made people forgetful of his abundant pathos. Sit down, Walter; and I will read to you some portions of a poem which might well have been written in this very spot. Fix your eyes on yonder magnificent avenue of elms, and listen:—*

"' 'Twas in a shady avenue,
Where lofty elms abound—
And from a tree
There came to me
A sad and solemn sound,
That sometimes murmured overhead,
And sometimes underground.

"' Amongst the leaves it seemed to sigh,
Amid the boughs to moan;
It muttered in the stem, and then
The roots took up the tone;
As if beneath the dewy grass
The dead began to groan....

"' With wary eyes, and ears alert,
As one who walks afraid,
I wandered down the dappled path
Of mingled light and shade—
How sweetly gleamed that arch of blue
Beyond the green arcade!'

"The next verse, Walter, you will say, is pe-

^{*}Our quotations are made from Moxon's one volume edition (1855) of Hood's Serious Poems. See "The Elm Tree," pp. 9–26.

culiarly applicable to the grand old avenue before us,—

"' 'How cheerly shone the glimpse of heav'n
Beyond that verdant aisle!
All overarched with lofty elms,
That quenched the light, the while,
As dim and chill
As serves to fill
Some old cathedral pile!

"' And many a gnarled trunk was there,
That ages long had stood,
Till Time had wrought them into shapes
Like Pan's fantastic brood.'

"The whole of the poem is too long for me to read now; but I must tell you that the woodman enters into this grand avenue, and begins to fell the tree that breathed a sad and solemn sound. He plies his axe lustily, and with harsh and sullen crash the doomed elm drops upon the earth.

"'Oh! now the forest trees may sigh:
The ash, the poplar tall,
The elm, the birch, the drooping beech,
The aspens—one and all,
With solemn groan
And hollow moan,
Lament a comrade's fall!

"'A goodly elm, of noble girth,
That, thrice the human span—
While on their variegated course,
The constant seasons ran—
Through gale, and hail, and flery bolt,
Had stood erect as man.'

"This task concluded, the woodman leaves the

scene, and straightway a grim Shape enters, at which, with sudden fear, the dappled deer effect a swift escape—the sky turns pale—the earth grows dark—and an universal panic owns the dread approach of Death. The awful shadow then proceeds to show how all human state and power, all human love and suffering, must eventually be buried in the elm tree wood:—

"'Haughty peer and mighty king,
One doom shall overwhelm!
The oaken cell
Shall lodge him well
Whose sceptre ruled a realm—
While he who never knew a home,
Shall find it in the elm!

"'The tattered, lean, dejected wretch
Who begs from door to door,
And dies within the cressy ditch,
Or on the barren moor,—
The friendly elm shall lodge and clothe
That houseless man and poor!

"'Yea, this recumbent rugged trunk,
That lies so long and prone,
With many a fallen acorn-cup,
And mast and piny cone,—
This rugged trunk shall hold its share
Of mortal flesh and bone!

"'A miser hoarding heaps of gold,
But pale with ague fears;
A wife lamenting love's decay,
With secret, cruel tears,
Distilling bitter, bitter thoughts
From sweets of former years;

""A man within whose gloomy mind
Offence had darkly sunk,
Who out of fierce Revenge's cup
Hath madly, darkly drunk;—
Grief, Avarice, and Hate shall sleep
Within this very trunk!

"This massy trunk, that lies along,
And many more must fall;
For the very knave
Who digs the grave,
The man who spreads the pall,
And he who tolls the funeral bell.—
The elm shall have them all!"

Here Arthur finished reading, and Walter, who had listened with bated breath and flushed cheek, sprang to his feet, and gave vent to his excited feelings in a loud "Hurrah!"

"That's capital," he said, in his off-hand, school-boy way; "that's splendid—that's glorious! When a fellow hears poetry which is poetry—no milk-and-water stuff, but genuine feeling and true pathos—why, his heart is stirred to the very depths, though he may not be anything of a poet himself. But come, Arthur, we were—that is, I was—to have another botanical lecture; and, as you have brought the elm so vividly to my mind, I vote that you take the elm as your subject."

"I propose to take the three trees that make up the best avenues, because avenues composed of these trees are now before us,—namely, the lime, the elm, and the chestnut." "Nothing could be better," said Walter, "for I am sure I know very little of either."

"Will you be kind enough to hand me my knapsack? Thank you. I brought with me a few notes, which will be useful for reference."

"What a jolly fellow you are, Arthur, to take so much trouble for another fellow! Now then, Arthur, I have got a comfortable seat on a pile of dead leaves, and am all attention!"

"The lime," said Arthur, "belongs, botanically speaking, to the genus *Tilia*, of the class and order *Polyandria monogynia*."*

"Oh, bother all that!" cried Walter, disdainfully.



LIME TREE.

"It is a very graceful tree, of full flowing outlines and of rich green foliage; with luxuriant flowers, which fill the air with sweetness for a considerable distance. Its general form is pyramidal, but not rigidly so; and in girth and altitude it ranks as a first-class tree, frequently attaining a height

of eighty to ninety feet, and a circumference of

^{*} That is, according to the Linnean system. According to the modern system, it belongs to the natural order Tiliacea.

fourteen to sixty feet. It was a favourite tree with the Romans, and allusions to it are frequent in Latin poetry. Some writers think it was introduced into England by the Romans, but the more general opinion seems to be that the two first English lime trees were planted at Halstead, in Kent, about 1590.

"The wood of the lime is not very valuable for building purposes, nor is it adapted for any situation in which it will be subject to alternations of dryness and moisture. It is of a yellowish-white colour, very light and soft, of a firm close grain, and not liable to attacks from worms or insects. It is much used by the manufacturers of pianofortes for sounding-boards, and by carriage-builders for panellings. It is also employed in the manufacture of toys and Tunbridge ware. But its chief value is derived from its suitability for the wood-carver's skill; and in lime wood nearly all the exquisite carving of Grinling Gibbons was executed, showing as sharp and decisive now as when fresh from the carver's wonder-working chisel.

"The lime condescends, however, to smaller utilities. The bark, after being steeped or macerated in water, furnishes the material of which our bass-mats are made; the fibre is manufactured into nets; the charcoal is used in making gunpowder. Then again, from the delicious flowers the bees extract a no less delicious honey; so that, apart

from its beauty, the lime has claims upon our attention.

"The principal varieties are, the small-leaved European lime, the common lime, and the broadleaved European lime.

"One of the largest limes in England grows at Moor Park, in Surrey, where it crowns a beautiful little knoll, and forms a perfect tower of foliage. Nineteen large branches, six or eight feet in girth, strike out horizontally from sixty-seven to seventy-one feet, and these support three or four upright limbs. At the surface of the earth, its stem is twenty-three feet three inches in girth; at three feet above, it is seventeen feet six inches. Its branches extend one hundred and twenty-two feet in diameter, and cover three hundred and sixty feet in circumference. It is nearly one hundred feet in height.

"I recollect to have seen at Cobham Park-"

"Cobham Park? Oh ay," said Walter; "you mean the Earl of Darnley's beautiful seat in Kent!"

"Yes; at Cobham Park I remember to have seen a glorious lime tree upwards of ninety feet in height. It was a perfect picture, with its luxuriant mass of foliage and wide-sweeping branches.

"There is a famous avenue of limes at Penshurst, in whose fragrant shade Sir Philip Sidney and Edmund Spenser may often have walked and



COBHAM PARK, SURREY.

mused, and conversed upon things human and divine."

"Now, then, for the elm, Arthur."

"The elm is altogether a prouder, a statelier, and a graver tree. Limes may belong to ladies and poets; elms, somehow, seem to be more fitly associated with statesmen and warriors, with the doughty deeds and solemn concerns of life. Its foliage has a peculiarly individual character, for the leaves are small and light, but they hang together in gorgeous masses, which afford the most beautiful effects of light and shade.



ELM TREES.

"It is the first tree which salutes the early spring by assuming its garb of light and lively green; but as the year advances, the elm leaf takes a deeper tint, harmonizing with that of the fir; in

autumn its rich yellow sympathizes with the orange of the beech.

"More picturesque than the common elm, is that variety known as the wych or mountain elm. It is very common in Scotland, where it flourishes famously in the wooded glens and dells of the mountain districts, striking its tenacious roots into the rich loose soil on the banks of the foaming torrents. You will also meet with it, in equal perfection, in the grand river dales of Yorkshire-in Wharfedale, and Teesdale, and the like. I think, as Lauder says, that it is one of the most beautiful trees in our British sylva. 'The trunk is so bold and picturesque in form, covered, as it frequently is, with huge excrescences; the limbs and branches are so free and graceful in their growth, and the foliage is so rich, without being heavy or clumpy as a whole, and the head is generally so finely massed, and yet so well broken, as to render it one of the noblest of park trees."

"Bravo, Arthur! You deserve a few minutes' rest. What a lecturer you would make! or, stay, you shall go into Parliament, and become a great orator."

While Arthur Vernon is resting himself, we may continue the subject of his remarks, by quoting from Mr. Selby a general description of the character of the elm.

"Elms," he says, "are mostly trees of the first rank, attaining, in favourable situations, dimensions scarcely, if at all, inferior to the oak, the chestnut, the beech, or the ash; they live to a great age, and produce a hard and valuable timber; they grow with strong upright trunks, but these differ in character, according to the habit of the species or variety to which they belong. Insome the branches and head are generally subordinate to an elongated, conspicuous, central trunk. In others. the central column becomes lost or divided at a greater or less height, in the great diverging boughs or arms which form the head of the tree."



leaves in all the species grow upon stalks, are unequal at the base, and indented at the edge, like the teeth of a saw; they are generally rough and harsh to the touch. The flowers ex-

ELM LEAF. pand before the leaves, and spring in copious tufts from the buds of the shoots of the previous year's growth; their usual colour is a purplish-red.

In England, especially in the southern and midland counties, the elm is found in great abundance, and also, be it said, in great perfection. It not only enters into the composition of public avenues and drives, but is prevalent in the parks which surround our old ancestral mansions, and in many districts, as in the valleys of the Thames and the Severn, is the common hedge-row timber. Beautiful it is under every condition, with its tall spiral development, and straight continuous trunk. It grows rapidly, and frequently reaches a height of from seventy to ninety feet, with a trunk of four or five feet in diameter; attaining these dimensions within a period of one hundred years. The spray of the

species is light and slender, with the green lush shoots starting from the stem at an acute angle, and in an alternate manner, as shown in the figure. This mode of growth, as Mr. Selby observes, communicates a flat or fan-like form to the young branches, which,

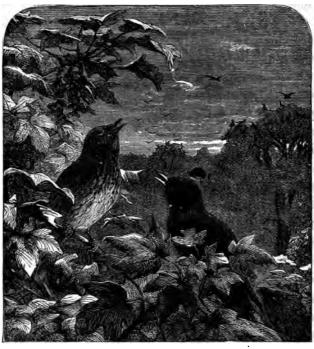


SPRAY OF THE ENGLISH ELM.

however, becomes less apparent as the trees "wax old," and as one year's shoot is added to another, until the weight of the spray eventually becomes too great for the branch to support it at its original angle, and it is compelled to assume a declining, or more or less pendent form. The leaves of this species are toothed or serrated on each side, are rough and harsh to the touch, and of a dark shining green at maturity. The flowers, which appear before the leaves, cluster in tufts upon the

shoots of the previous year, and are coloured of a purplish-red.

"Oh, there goes a thrush!" cried Walter; "and there goes another! Husband and wife, I daresay!



THE THRUSH.

I should not wonder but that their nest is hidden away somewhere among these green leaves. Hark, Arthur! don't they warble pleasantly?" "You won't find a thrush's nest in an elm, Walter! You may light upon it, perhaps, in one of the neighbouring bushes, or among the thickets on the bank of the stream we crossed; but thrushes seldom build in the trees. Don't you remember what Burns sings?—

'Within a milk-white hawthorn bush, Among her nestlings sits the thrush;'

and poor unfortunate poet Clare, in his beautiful description of a thrush's nest, speaks of having found it—

- 'Within a thick and spreading hawthorn bush That overhung a mole-hill large and round.'"
- "What pretty eggs the thrush lays!"
- "Yes; they may well be compared to 'heath-bells gilt with dew.' I suppose you know that they are generally five in number, and of a bright bluish-green colour, besprinkled with spots of inky black."
 - "Are there not many varieties of thrushes?"
- "Yes: the song thrush (or mavis), the missel thrush (sometimes called the storm cock or skrike), and the variegated or Hampshire thrush. The latter is very rare, but has sometimes been found in the New Forest. But to the thrush family also belong the blackbird, the fieldfare, and the redwing."

"All the thrushes sing well. Which do you like best, Arthur,—the song of the mavis or that of the blackbird?"

"What an absurd question! The two are perfectly distinct in character, and therefore I can like both, without giving a preference to either. Not only do the two birds differ in song, but they differ



THE BLACKBIRD.

in habits. The thrush loves the woods and fields; the blackbird the orchards and gardens, where he builds his nest—

'The o'erarching boughs between, Of some selected evergreen, Of laurel thick, or branching fir, Or bed of pleasant lavender.'"

"You spoke of the missel thrush: why is it called missel?"

"Because it feeds on the berries of the mistletoe in winter—a season, by-the-by, when, for this very reason, it is much better fed than other birds. It will also eat the berries of the yew, the holly, and the ivy. And very pleasant it is, on a cold bright winter day, when the snow lies deep upon the ground, and all the voices of nature are hushed, to hear its clear resounding melody ringing bell-like through the air. It seems like a promise of the good time coming, of a renewal of nature's bounty in the forthcoming year. And let me remind you, Walter, that the missel thrush is of some importance as a weather-prophet. The approach of a snow-storm, after a deceitful spring-tide beam of brightness, is always announced by his loud prophetic voice."

"Then I would like to keep a missel thrush. But, I say, Arthur, this won't do at all. We have got away from trees to birds. You undertook to discourse of—let me see, oh ay—limes, elms, and chestnuts. Of limes you have spoken, and of elms you have spoken, but not of chestnuts. Come, let us return to our trees."

"Well; it is time we set off homeward, and as we go I will tell you what little I know about the Chestnut-tree. But this is not the season of the year in which the chestnut shows all its beauty. A chestnut avenue looks most glorious about the end of May or the beginning of June, when the boughs are splendidly embellished with their wealth of delicate prickly blossoms, their conical clusters of softly tinted snow. In Bushy Park, near Hampton Court, there is an avenue about one mile and a

quarter in length, which, at the time of the year I speak of, seems like a scene out of fairy-land. Fairy-land, indeed! fairy-land has nothing half so beautiful, for it is only what the imagination of men may make it; while *this* is fashioned by a divine Creator.

"There is one thing to be said about the chestnut, which you will think a recommendation; it is easily recognized. Its wide ramification—that is, the sweep and direction of its branches; its dome-like foliage; its large green velvety leaf;—these are characteristics not readily mistaken. The species now generally met with in Britain is the horse





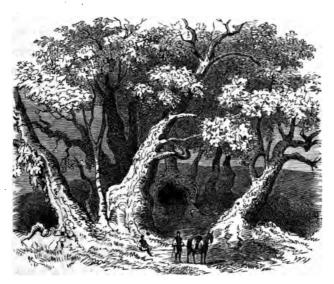
FRUIT OF SPANISH CHESTNUT.

HORSE CHESTNUT.

chestnut (*Esculus hippocastanum*), which is said to be of Asiatic origin, and to have been introduced into Europe about the middle of the sixteenth century. It is not a very valuable tree, its wood being very soft, and easily affected by atmospheric

alternations; but its bark, which gives a yellow dye, is sometimes used in tanning, and its nuts, when bruised or reduced to a pulp, in bleaching linen.

"Chestnuts attain to a very respectable stature; sometimes to as much as ninety or one hundred feet, with a trunk of proportionate thickness.



CHESTNUT OF A HUNDRED HORSEMEN.

"The Spanish chestnut (Fagus Castanea) is a still handsomer tree, though much rarer; and its timber is of high value. It grows in great abundance on the slopes of the Apennines, and for miles forms an almost impervious shade. A famous tree

of this kind is found upon Mount Etna—the 'castagna di cento cavalli,' or Chestnut of a Hundred Horsemen—under whose leafy shade a whole company of cavalry might be assembled. It consists of five stems or trunks, together containing a space of 204 feet in diameter. There is one in Cobham Park called the Four Sisters, which, though of far inferior dimensions, is magnificently picturesque. It measures 35 feet at the ground, and 29 feet at three feet from the ground; and in outline and depth of foliage is a gem to set on fire an artist's soul.

"Of celebrated horse chestnuts we may mention one at Burleigh, 60 feet high and 10 feet in girth; and two at Dawick, in Peeblesshire, which form but one mass of foliage, though having two separate trunks about twelve feet apart. The longest of these is nearly 17 feet in circumference at the base; the smaller, $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet. They are probably upwards of two centuries old."

"Much older, I suppose, than this grand holly hedge, though, I should think, from the size of its stems, it must be tolerably venerable. Where are you looking, Arthur? I mean the hedge on this side, which seems to have been intended to fence off a piece of lawn. Is it not splendid? Look at its shining prickly leaves; I'd almost as soon attempt to break through a barrier of bayonets as through a hedge like that!"

"Your enthusiasm reminds me of Evelyn's: 'Is

there,' he exclaims in his 'Sylva,'-· is there under heaven a more glorious and refreshing object of the kind. than an impenetrable hedge, of one hundred and sixty feet in length, seven feet in height, and five in diameter. which I can show in my poor garden [at Sayes Court], at any time of the year, glittering with its



armed and varnished leaves; the latter like standards at orderly distances, blushing with their natural coral. It mocks at the rudest assaults of the weather, beasts, or hedge-breaker,—

'Et illum nemo impune lacessit.'"

"Oh, I have read of Evelyn's famous holly hedge! Did he not let his house at Sayes Court, near Deptford, to Peter the Great? And did not Peter the Great amuse himself by driving a wheel-barrow through the beautiful hedge?"

"Yes; much to its owner's grief and discontent. The holly, however, is not only beautiful in itself but in its associations, for we have long been accustomed to connect it with that happy season which reminds us of our Saviour's birth, and yearly impresses upon us a lesson of peace and goodwill. How bright its green leaves and scarlet berries look, contrasted with the duller laurel, and the dim, wan mistletoe! And then, too, it is always the same—in winter darkness and summer sheen—ever beautiful, and fresh, and verdant."

"I declare, Arthur, you ought to be a poet. At all events, you make everything seem—what shall I say?—you know—seem romantic and poetical. So, perhaps, you would like to hear—if I can remember them—some verses about the holly, which mamma taught me; they were written, she said, by a poet named Southey."

"I know them, Walter, and like them very much. It will please me greatly if you will repeat them, and where your memory fails you, perhaps I can help you out."

"Here goes then;" and Walter's clear voice resounded through the forest glades like a silver bell:—

"'O Arthur!* hast thou ever stood to see The Holly-tree?

^{*} Walter here diverges from the original text, which runs: "O reader!"

The eye that contemplates it well perceives
Its glossy leaves,
Ordered by an Intelligence so wise
As might confound the Atheist's sophistries.

""Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle through their prickly round
Can reach to wound;
But as they grow where nothing is to fear,
Smooth and unarmed the pointless leaves appear.'"

"Yes; Southey here refers to a remarkable peculiarity of the holly. It is only its *lower* leaves that are defended with spines; the *upper* are as thornless as those of the rose. Go on, Walter."

"'I love to view these things with anxious eyes,
And moralize:
And in this wisdom of the Holly-tree
Can emblems see
Wherewith perchance to make a pleasant rhyme,
One which may profit in the after-time.

"' Thus, though abroad perchance I might appear
Harsh and austere,
To those who on my leisure would intrude
Reserved and rude;
Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be,
Like the high leaves upon the Holly-tree.

"' And should my youth, as youth is apt, I know,
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I day by day
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the Holly-tree.'

"That is all I learned, Arthur; but I think there are some more verses."

"Yes; those you have repeated refer only to the different character of the upper and lower leaves. The poet goes on to draw a lesson from their unvarying but always fresh and pleasant colour:—

"' And as when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green,
The Holly leaves a sober hue display
Less bright than they;
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,
What then so cheerful as the Holly-tree?

"' So serious should my youth appear among
The thoughtless throng;
So would I seem amid the young and gay
More grave than they,
That in my age as cheerful I might be
As the green winter of the Holly-tree.'

"An excellent bit of advice for you and me, Walter. But here we are at home. Our journey and our recitation come to an end together."





CHAPTER IV.

THE LADY BIRCH.

The birch-trees wept in fragrant balm Gray birch and aspen wept beneath.—Scott.

The scented birk and hawthorn white Across the pool their arms unite.—BURNS.

Most beautiful
Of forest trees, the Lady of the Woods.—Coleridge.

HE next day Walter and Arthur were prevented from taking their accustomed walk by a continuous shower of rain. They sat at the window looking out upon the dim recesses and vaporous shades of the Forest, rejoicing in the sweet odours which exhaled

and rejoicing in the sweet odours which exhaled from the thirsty earth. There is something indescribably pleasant in rain in summer. In winter it is dull, and dismal, and deplorable; and the spirit sinks beneath an overwhelming weight of despair, as the heavy drops plash against the

window-pane, or gather on the dripping arms of the skeleton-like trees; but in summer, it so freshens the air, and wakes up the nodding flowers, and enlivens the green of the leaf, and brightens the verdant sward, and mitigates the heated breeze, as to bring with it a novel and pleasurable sense of exaltation of mind and heart. I think the pattering of the crystal drops on the dense foliage as sweet a music as one could wish to hear. And then, how the blossoms open wide their coloured chalices, and carefully store up the sweet ambrosia, until they actually overflow with the sweetness, and are forced to part with a portion of their treasure! The hedges, just now so white and wan with dust, are blooming freshly again, as if revived by the breath of spring. The rill which runs across the meadow was half dried up, and seemed ashamed to make any longer pretence of feeding the herbage or satisfying the bird. Now it is full once more. and brims up boldly above the grass, as if to invite the whole feathered race to come and share its happiness. Down, down come the thick and rapid drops into the pool, and soon a swarm of flies spreads over its surface, and a lazy trout or two awaken to the consciousness of the prey suddenly brought within their reach. And ever and anon a stray sunbeam glints through the breaking clouds, and paints the scene with beautiful shifting colours of violet, and green, and gold, and vermilion, until each tiny crystal becomes, as it were, a prism, and dazzles the eye with its magical reflections.

Oh, very sweet, in truth, is rain in summer!

And such was the opinion of the two cousins, as they contentedly marked the progress of the shower, and watched its influence on the landscape, where every blade, and leaf, and bud seemed to quicken with new life, and assumed a charm which they had not possessed before. Sitting in this tranquil enjoyment, Arthur thought the time a favourable one for the resumption of his lessons on trees, and, as Walter was willing enough to listen, he delivered a short lecture on the graceful Birch. What he said may be summed up in the following words:—

The most beautiful variety of the birch, and the one most commonly met with in "English parks and gardens shady," is a species of the White or Common Birch (Betula alba), popularly called the Lady Birch, or the Weeping Birch. Its spray is very long and slender, and droops gracefully, like that of the weeping willow; from its exquisite lightness it is easily agitated by the gentlest breath of air.

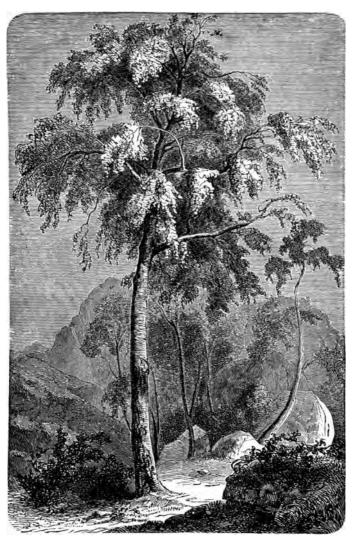
Its stem, says Gilpin, is generally marked with brown, yellow, and silvery touches, which are peculiarly picturesque, as they are characteristic objects of imitation for the pencil, and contrast agreeably with the dark green hue of the foliage. But only the stem and larger branches are lit up by this rich variety of tints; the spray is of a deep brown; and of a deep brown, too, are the larger branches, when the external rind is peeled off. As the birch grows old, the bark becomes rough and furrowed. It loses all its manifold "lights and shades," and acquires an uniform ferruginous hue.

In botanical language, the leaf of the birch is ovate, acute, nearly smooth, and unequally serrated or indented.

When young, the leaf emits a delicious perfume—especially after rain or heavy dew; and at such a time a stroll through the "birken shaws" is one of those pleasures which rank among the brightest memories of life. It is worth while to live, were it only to participate in the cheap enjoyments which a boundless Providence has so abundantly provided! And long will the "man of feeling" remember those happy hours when, as Professor Wilson sings,—

"On the green slope
Of a romantic glen he sat him down,
Amid the fragrance of the yellow broom,
While o'er his head the weeping birch-tree streamed
Its branches, circling like a fountain shower."

On account of this sweet odour, Sir T. Dick Lauder recommends that some of these birch-trees should always be planted near a house, so as to fill



THE BIRCH.

the air with their fragrance—which originates, as he adds, in the gum exuding from the leaves and spray.

The weeping birch does not, as a rule, attain to any remarkable height or girth; but some extraordinary exceptions are on record.

Thus, a weeping birch at Ballogie, in Aberdeenshire, in 1792, measured five feet in circumference; and it carried nearly this degree of thickness, with a smooth stem, up to the height of about fifty feet, or nearly half the full stature of the tree.

There are, or were, many birches in the wild woods of Moray which measured ten and eleven feet in circumference.

The birch grows quickly, and, like most things of rapid growth, has but a brief existence. In thirty years it will rise forty feet high; but it reaches its maturity in about seventy years, or, at most, in about a century. It is able to brave a severe climate. In the Scottish Highlands it forms the chief ornament of the mountain-slopes and the shadowy glens, drooping its graceful foliage over many a wimpling burn and flashing torrent. It has been found at an altitude of 3500 feet above the sea, though at such a height it is little more than a bush. Throughout all the warm and temperate parts of Europe it inhabits the high and mountainous lands, at elevations regulated by their



A HIGHLAND TORRENT.

respective temperatures: thus, in the Apennines it begins to grow at a level of about 4600 feet above the sea, and rises to 6000 feet. In Lapland, its line is 1937 feet below that of perpetual snow. It relieves the monotony of the Russian plains; flourishes in the valleys of Sweden and Norway; and is even found among the crags and hills of Iceland. In these northern countries its timber is very extensively used for making furniture, and as

fuel; the outer bark, which remains incorruptible for ages, is used instead of tiles or slabs as a roofing for houses; and being very inflammable, it is likewise employed for candles. By the Laplanders the bark is made into baskets, mats, neat compact boxes, and cordage for harnessing the reindeer; also for water-proof boots and shoes; while a piece of it, with a hole cut so as to admit the head, forms an impenetrable cloak, or cape, in wet weather. The charcoal made from the birch is of a very superior quality, is used in the manufacture of gunpowder, and forms an excellent crayon for the artist. By tapping the tree in early spring, a supply of sap may be obtained, which is easily manufactured into a refreshing and wholesome beverage.





CHAPTER V.

"BEECHEN GROVES."

Faint rainy lights are seen

Moving in the leafy beech.—Tennyson.

The warlike beech. - Spenser.

HE two cousins were seated on the following day, after a long and delightful walk, at the foot of a venerable beech, whose gnarled trunk and wide-reaching branches made it a conspicuous object. Walter had been amusing himself with gathering a posy of wild-flowers, which he submitted to his cousin's examination, that those might be identified whose names he had forgotten. Most of them, however, were familiar friends; the dear old favourites which have been the delight of many a generation of English boys and girls, and the theme of many a generation of minstrels, from the days of Chaucer to those of Tennyson. There

was the delicate little blue-bell—the harebell of our bards—which seems made for fairy musicians to ring a chime upon; the purple thyme, rich in aromatic odour; the delicious meadow-sweet, with its



THE BLUE BELL AND FERN.

foam-like blossoms; the haughty hypericon, or St. John's wort,—

"All bloom—so thick a swarm
Of flowers, like flies clothing her slender rods,
That scarce a leaf appears;

the pretty pink scabious; and the pure white campion—all bound up and enclosed in a garniture of the common fern, or bracken, whose tall, broad, waving fronds grow wild and free

> "By the rippling brook and the wimpling burn, And the tall and stately forest-tree."

After these sweet gifts of Nature had been duly admired, the cousins sat in silence awhile, listening to the various sounds which thrilled through the woodlands—the song of birds, the whisper of leaves, and the babble of distant brooks.

"Hark!" said Arthur suddenly; "do you know the old song about

'The woodpecker tapping the hollow beech-tree?'

You can hear him now at his useful work."

"Oh yes! It is just like the noise of a small hammer. What is the meaning of it?"

"He is searching



THE WOODPECKER.

for insects, and having found a suitable tree, where a colony have taken up their lodging, he is knocking with his hard strong beak against the trunk on the opposite side to their location. Alarmed by the sound, they will creep out through the chinks and crevices; and our friend, quickly passing round to the other side, will lick them up with his long and slender tongue. His claws are sharp, and of immense strength, so that he is able to hold on to the trunk while he uses his beak as a hammer. Sometimes, however—but earlier in the year than this—he uses it as an auger and a saw, cutting out and digging out a cavity, at the bottom of which he and his mate deposit their nest and bring up their young."

"I know he is a very industrious and clever bird, and that he is of great service to man from the ravages he commits in the insect world."

"Well; his 'tapping the hollow beech-tree' reminds me that our Talk about Trees may as well be resumed, and that the Beech will make a fitting subject.

"It is supposed by many writers to be identical with the *fagus* of the Romans, and I daresay both you and I have translated the well-known line in Virgil,—

'Tityre tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi,'

as

'O'Tityrus, reclining under the shade of a far-spreading beech.'
Whether Roman or English-—whether found in the

woods of Buckinghamshire or in the plantations of Scotland—the beech is always 'one of the most magnificent objects of God's fair creation.' Buckinghamshire, let me add, is said by Camden to derive its name from the old English 'bocken;' beech-trees, and the deep shadows of the beechen groves, still clothe the green declivities of its chalky hills. They may be found in rare beauty in the neighbourhood of Great Hampden—the paternal seat of the famous patriot, John Hampden; and there are calm wooded dells in the neighbourhood which seem like exquisite little bits of the poets' land.

"'The beech,' says one of our writers, 'may not

exhibit those characteristics which produce picturesque effect in so eminent a degree as the oak or the ash; still, it possesses in itself many attractions and favourable accidents, whether it be in the form of a vast umbrageous tree, with a short but massive stem,



THE BEECH.

such as it usually appears when growing solitary; or detached from other trees, and such as we

may fancy the wide-spreading beech of the Mantuan bard to have been; or whether it presents a straight and lofty trunk, rising amidst its neighbours like a polished column, and crowned by a canopy of the thickest foliage, such as it is when nursed and drawn up with other trees, or in company with those of its own kind, and where, as combining magnificence with beauty, it has been pronounced at once the Hercules and Adonis of our Sylva.'

"'They make spreading trees,' says quaint old Evelyn, 'with their well-furnished and glistering leaves......In the valleys, where they stand warm and in consort, they will grow to a stupendous procerity, though the soil be stony and very barren; also upon the declivities, sides, and tops of high hills.'

"The leaf of the beech, with its glazed metallic surface, is really a precious thing, and in autumn it passes through such a variety of tints as the foliage of no other tree can equal. From modest brown it warms into glowing orange; and I declare I know of no lovelier sight in nature than a beech wood lit up by the rays of an autumnal sunset."

"I remember," interrupted Walter, "that was always one of the favourite scenes of poor papa."

"Well, Walter, it is difficult, we know, to distinguish among all the wonderful and romantic spectacles which Providence has called into being, either for the gratification of man or the manifestation of its supreme power. Take, for instance, the trees: who shall decide between the various claims of oak and elm, and beech and birch? Has not each its own specific and peculiar beauty? we call the one more than the other the 'monarch of the forest?' Is the 'beechen wood' on the slopes of the Chilterns more worthy of admiration than the 'birken shaw' of a Highland glen? Let us admit, with grateful hearts, that though their characteristics are different, their claims to our admiration are equal. So we may say of the beech, that though it lacks the 'tufted beauty' of the foliage of the oak, or the 'feathery lightness' of that of the ash, it has a charm of its own in its noble and majestic proportions, in its umbrageous and thickly clothed crest, and in the splendour of its foliage, 'either when mature, and reflecting in gem-like coruscations, from its deep-green polished surface, every play or scintillation of light; or as it first bursts from its envelopes, tender in hue and delicate in texture."

"Don't they call the fruit of the beech mast?"

"The mast is the nuts that fall from the trees in the late autumn, and is much esteemed by pigs. 'We must not forget,' says Evelyn, 'to praise the mast, which fats our swine and deer, and hath, in some families, even supported men with bread.

1.

Chios endured a memorable siege by the benefit of this mast; and in some parts of France they [did once] grind the bark in mills; it affords a sweet oil, which the poor people did eat most willingly.' Evelyn goes on to point out some other advantages which we derive from this tree: 'The beech,' he says, 'serves for various uses of the housewife; with it the turner makes dishes, travs, bowls, kimbs for buckets, and other utensils, trenchers, dresser-boards, &c.; likewise for the wheeler, joiner, and upholsterer, for setties, chairs, stools, bedsteads; for fuel, billets, bavin, and coal, though one of the least lasting; not to omit even the very shavings, for the refining of wines.....But there is yet another benefit which this tree presents us-that its very leaves, which make a natural and most agreeable canopy all the summer, being gathered about the fall, and somewhat before they are much frost-bitten, afford the best and easiest mattress in the world, to lay under our quilts instead of straw, because, besides their tenderness and loose lying together, they continue sweet for seven or eight years long, before which time straw becomes musty and hard."

"In our garden at home, Arthur, we have a pretty tree, which the gardener calls a copper beech."

"It is a pretty tree, owing to the rich colour of its leafage, but is simply a variety of the *purple* beech. It is said that the original purple beech was

first discovered in a wood in Germany, some seventy or eighty years ago, and that from this single stock all the purple beeches now growing in Europe have been propagated, either by grafts or from seeds. From their contrast with other foliage, they are very graceful ornaments of our pleasure-grounds.

"And now let us quit the 'beechen shade,' and move homeward. To-morrow I want to talk to you about the Conifers; but I shall have so much to tell, that I think I had better jot it down in writing, and then I can read it off 'without let or hindrance.' So, remember, Walter; the conifers to-morrow!"





CHAPTER VI.

THE CONIFERS.

My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge High over the blue gorge, and all between The snowy peak and snow-white cataract Fostered the callow eaglet.—TENNYSON.

Dewed with showery drops,
Up clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.—Tennyson.

The cedar proud and tall.—Spenser.

Overhead up grew
Insuperable height of loftiest shade—
Cedar, and pine, and fir....a sylvan scene.—Milton.

Cover me, ye pines!
Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs!—Milton.

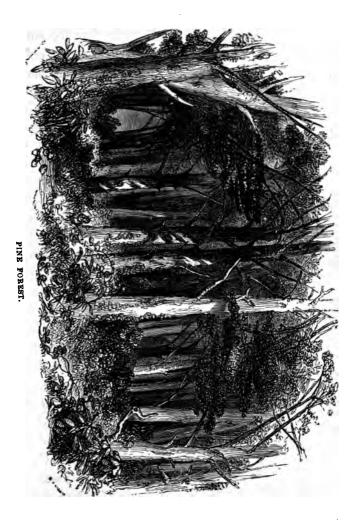
RTHUR SOMERVILLE'S "Chat about Conifers," as his cousin laughingly entitled it, we shall set down unabridged, for the benefit of our younger readers: premising, that the Coniferæ, Conifers, or Cone-bearing trees, are so named in to the characteristic form of their flavour and the characteristic form of their flavour and their flavour

allusion to the characteristic form of their flowers or fruit; that they have mostly narrow and veinless leaves; that their growth is generally pyramidal; that they attain to a noble stature; that many of them are long-lived; and that most of them belong to the northern hemisphere. Their principal representatives are the pine, fir, larch, cedar, juniper, cypress, yew, and araucaria.

Amongst these, the foremost place will be given, we think, by every one with a feeling for the picturesque, to the PINE. But to see this noble tree in all its magnificence, we must go north; we must visit the glens, the river-sides, and the lofty mountains of Scotia. "We, for our parts," says Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, very finely, "confess that when we have seen it towering in full majesty in the midst of some appropriate Highland scene, and sending its limbs abroad with all the unrestrained freedom of a hardy mountaineer, as if it claimed dominion over the savage region round it, we have looked upon it as a very sublime object. People who have not seen it in its native climate and soil, and who judge of it from the wretched abortions which are swaddled and suffocated in English plantations, among dark, heavy, and eternally wet clays, may well call it a wretched tree; but when its foot is among its own Highland heather, and when it stands freely in its native knoll of dry gravel or thinly-covered rock, over which its roots wander afar in the wildest reticulation (that is, net-work), whilst its tall, furrowed, and often gracefully-sweeping red and gray trunk, of enormous circumference, rears aloft its high umbrageous canopy, then would the greatest sceptic on this point be compelled to prostrate his mind before it with a veneration which, perhaps, was never before excited in him by any other tree."

In a glorious passage of semi-poetical prose, the pine is thus celebrated by Professor Wilson:—

"Its colour," he says, "has been objected to as murky—and murky it often is, or seems to be; and so then is the colour of the heather, and of the river, and of the loch, and of the sky itself, thunderladen: and murkiest of all are the clouds. But a stream of sunshine is let loose, and the gloom is confounded with glory; over all that night-like reign the jocund day goes dancing, and the forest revels in green or in golden light. Thousands and tens of thousands of pines are there; and as you gaze upon the whole mighty array, you fear lest it might break the spell to fix your gaze upon any one single tree. But there are trees there that will force you to look on themselves alone, and they grow before your eyes into the kings of the forest. stand their stems in the sunshine, and you feel that as straight have they stood in the storm. As yet you look not up, for your heart is awed, and you see but the stately columns reddening in the gloom.



But all the while you feel the power of the umbrage aloft, and when thitherwards you lift your eyes, what a roof to such a cathedral! A cone drops at your feet-nor other sound nor other stirbut afar off you think you hear a cataract. Inaudible your footsteps on the soft yellow floor, composed of the autumnal sheddings of countless years. it is true that you can indeed hear the beating of your own heart; you fear, but know not what you fear; and being the only living creature there, you are impressed with a thought of death. But soon to that severe silence you are more than reconciled; the solitude, without ceasing to be sublime, is felt to be solemn, and not awful, and ere long, utter as it is, serene. Seen from afar, the forest was one black mass; but as you advance, it opens up into spacious glades, beautiful as gardens, with appropriate trees of gentler tribes, and ground flowering in the sun. But there is no murmur of bee, no song of bird. In the air a thin whisper of insectsintermittent, and wafted quite away by a breath. For we are now in the very centre of the forest, and even the cushat haunts not here. Hither the red deer may come, but not now, for at this season they love the hill. To such places the stricken stag might steal to lie down and die."

The conifers are of all trees the most widely distributed. Some species or other may be found in

every country from the equator to Lapland, and they ascend the mountain-sides to the highest limit of vegetation. The cedar flourishes under the hot sky of Syria; the pine grows in all its majesty on the bleak coast of the Atlantic. Taking the latter as, however, the typical tree of the conifers, as the grandest and most useful, we notice that it derives its nutriment from the barrenest soil, that it braves the fury of the keenest winds, and clothes those parts of the earth with greenness which otherwise would be utterly sterile and naked. An eloquent writer has, therefore, said of it that its character and glory are owing, not to any "riotous living" in luxurious soil, but to its right doing of its hard duty, to its generous embellishment of barren places, to its climbing forward into those spots of forlorn hope where it usurps not the honour of others, and where, in truth, nothing can take from its honour, but it lives alone, and resplendent, a sign of the universal providence and mercy of God.

And in these places does it perform no useful office? Such is the question that will naturally suggest itself to every mind. We can easily answer it in the affirmative.

It draws to itself the moisture from the fugitive cloud; which, distilling from its leaves and branches, passes into the shaded soil, and thence percolates

(249)



through moss and grass into the heart of the rocks, - one tiny rill struggling onward to join another and yet another, until the whole accumulate in a copious stream, and emerge into the light of the day. Cut down the pine forests on the mountainside, and, before long, theneighbouringstreams would dry up, and the earth lose its luxuriance of vegetation.

But in the cold mountain-districts it answers another useful purpose—by arresting the progress of the glaciers, and the downward sweep of the avalanche. Sheltered by so effective a barrier, the peasant cultivates his lands in peace.

To perform so much useful work, the pine necessarily requires a peculiar organization. And this it

possesses. It is endowed, in truth, with a remarkable degree of strength, and an equally remarkable power of endurance. Its roots are adapted to the shallow, rocky soil in which it generally grows; they extend sideways rather than downwards, and spread over a considerable area of ground the entangled network of their immensely strong and knotted fibres. Thus, as Mr. Macmillan remarks, they make up for want of depth in the soil by the extent of it which they embrace; and by this contrivance, the trees are securely rooted, and capable of growing even in the bleakest situations—on the ledges of precipices, and on the most barren mountain heights.

But again: to protect the trunk from the severe cold which visits the localities where it usually grows, it is clothed with an unusually thick and rough bark—a bark always thickest and roughest on the side most exposed to the wind—and its timber is soaked, as it were, in resinous substances, all productive of heat.

Its pyramidal form is another wonderful provision; for it opposes less resistance to the violence of the wind than "the round-cushioned shapes" of trees growing in sheltered places. It also catches the falling snow, and by thus attiring itself in a thick and fleecy robe during the keen and prolonged frosts, is able to retain its inner heat, and to prevent any loss of vital power.

Once more: its leaves are exceedingly tough and narrow, so that they offer but little opposition to the wind, and yet at the same time are not easily separated from the branch or rent into fragments. Their number is immense, and they cling to the tree



THE FIF

through the summer's sun and the bleak winter's frost: so that each branch will always bear the burthen of five or six years upon By this it. most enormous and continuous multiplication of leaf - surfaces, work-

ing day and night, winter and summer, those mysterious operations, by which, through the agency of the leaf, "air, dew, and sunshine become changed into solid wood," are more rapidly accomplished in the pine than in trees whose individual leaves are broader, but

less numerous, and liable to the interruption of winter's rigour.

The Scotch Fir is a pine, and exhibits the same general characteristics. To appreciate all its majesty, however, it should be seen, not in a southern park, where the prevailing scenery is rich and pastoral, but in the bold, bleak landscapes of the Highlands, its native habitat. There it flourishes in mountain freedom; rejoicing equally in the bland sunshine and the rime and snow; flinging abroad its arms like an unfettered giant; lifting up its tufted crest, like the helm of a victorious chieftain. Its trunk is distinguished by a noble curve, and boasts of an enormous girth; yet it is content to grow in the poorest soil; and, far from striking its roots downwards to secure a firm hold, it spreads them abroad on the very surface.

We should like to have said something about the Spruce Fir, and the Stone Pine, and many other varieties of Conifers, but we must hasten to notice one which claims pre-eminence, both on account of its own dignity and its scriptural renown.

"Behold," says the prophet Ezekiel, "the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon with fair branches, and with a shadowing shroud, and of an high stature; and his top was among the thick boughs......His boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long.....

The fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty" (Ezek. xxxi. 3, 5, 8).

The Cedar of Lebanon is the king of trees; or rather, it is the high-priest of the forest, and invested with a kind of sacred character. It is marked by two prominent features, which the prophet has pointed out in the foregoing passagethe multiplicity and length of the branches, and the denseness of its leafy canopy. No tree excels it in majesty of appearance. Every one is familiar, says Mr. Macmillan, by description or observation, with the cedar of Lebanon. It is the tree, par excellence, of the Bible—the type of all forest vegetation. Religion and poetry have sounded its praises so loudly and repeatedly that it has become the most renowned natural monument in the world. untold ages it covered the rugged slopes of Lebanon with one continuous forest of verdure and fragrance, and formed its crowning "glory." The ravages of man, ruthlessly carried on for centuries, laid low its honours; and the splendour of the past is now-adays only typified by a few scattered groves which linger in the remote recesses of the highest valleys. And of these only one can lay claim to any great antiquity; the others are of later growth, and have sprung up within the last two hundred years.

The older cedars, says Dean Stanley, are only twelve

in number, and so different in appearance as seemingly to belong to quite a different. race Their forms, he continues. are such as must always have impressed the imagination of the people of the land. Their massive branches, clothed with a scalv texture. almost like the skin of



THE CEDAR.

living animals, and contorted with all the multiform irregularities of age, may well have suggested those ideas of regal, almost divine, strength and solidity, which the sacred writers ascribe to them. They stand at the apex, so to say, of the vegetable world. "From the cedar tree that is in Lebanon" downwards, is the knowledge of Solomon (1 Kings iv. 33). "To the cedar of Lebanon" upwards is the destruction of the trees from the burning bramble of

Jotham (Judges ix. 15). The intermarriage of the inferior plants with the cedar is the most inconceivable presumption of all (2 Chron. xxv. 18). shivering of their rock-like stems by the thunderbolt is like the shaking of the solid mountain itself (Ps. xxix. 5). In ancient days, continues our authority, the grove must have been much more extensive-or, rather, perhaps, the great trees then overspread the whole. Now they are huddled together in two or three of the central vales; and the peculiar grace of the long, sweeping branches, feathering down to the ground, of the cedar as transplanted into Europe, is there unknown. In one or two instances, the boughs of these aged trees are held up by a younger one; others, again, of which the trunks are decayed, are actually supported in the gigantic arms of their elder brethren. earlier times the breadth and extent of the trees seem to be as much noticed as their height and solidity. The cedar is the model of the "spreading abroad "-the constant growth-of the righteous man (Ps. xcii. 12); his boughs are "multiplied," "fair," "thick," and "overshadowing"—as in the passage from Ezekiel already quoted (Ezek. xxxi. 3-9). So vigorous and vast was this life of the cedar groves, that it seemed as if all the snows and waters of Lebanon were gathered up into them. They are "filled" (Ps. civ. 16); their "rest is by

quiet waters;" "the waters make them great; the deep set them up on high" (Ezek. xxxi. 4).

It is not, perhaps, a subject of wonder that about trees so remarkable the Orientals should frame a variety of legends. The peasant of the Lebanon entertain for them so great a reverence, that, on the Day of Transfiguration, they celebrate the festival under their leafy boughs with great solemnity. And they assert that the snows have no sooner begun to fall than these cedars begin to change their figure. The branches which before spread out horizontally, rise insensibly-gathering together, as it were—and turning their points upwards, as if to seek the light of heaven, until they form a pyramid. It is Nature, they say, who inspires this movement, and makes them assume a new shape, without which these trees never could sustain the pressure of the snow that rests upon them for so considerable a period.

This belief has been versified by Southey:—

" It was a cedar tree

Its broad, round-spreading branches, when they felt
The snow, rose upward in a point to heaven,
And standing in their strength erect,
Defied the baffled storm."

A remarkable fact in relation to the conifers must not be omitted—namely, that they are the most ancient of all trees, the first-born of the forest. We find their fossil relics in our coal-mines. Ages and ages ago, they covered the surface of the earth, and flourished over the immense wastes of the primeval world. Then came a succession of vast revolutions of flood and fire, and the cedars and the pines were buried under the deep waters, and afterwards embedded in the bowels of the earth, until the heat



COAL STRATA WITH FOSSIL LEAVES.

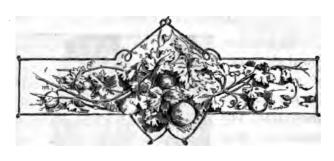
and the immense pressure to which they were subjected duly converted them into coal. In our household fires we are burning, therefore, the relics of extinct conifers, of trees which embellished the surface of the earth thousands of years before the creation

of man. "Innumerable ages before man, the heir of nature, had been put into the garden of Eden to dress and keep it," the cedar and the pine, and their congeners, "were purifying the atmosphere, and rendering the earth a fit habitation for him; and, by the same wonderful process, storing up, in the vast quantities of carbon thus appropriated, a mechanical energy which, after a sleep of millions

of years, was destined to rise again as the great physical regenerator of the human race."

I hope my young readers will understand this, for the fact is a very wonderful one, and well worthy of their thinking over. What is the use of facts unless we endeavour to gain some lesson from them? And of this particular fact the lesson is, that the forethought and wisdom and power of God are beyond all human calculation.





CHAPTER VII.

GRAVEYARD TREES.

The pillared dust of sounding sycamores. - TENNYSON.

The yew, obedient to the bender's will .- SPENSER.

Old yew, which graspest at the stones
That name the underlying dead,
Thy fibres net the dreamless head,
Thy roots are wrapt about the bones.—Tennyson.

The cypress, funereal, --- SPENSER,

The cypress! 'tis
A gloomy tree, which looks as if it mourned
O'er what it shadows . . .
Its branches
Shut out the sun like night.—Byron.

AM going to talk to you this morning," said Arthur, "about Graveyard Trees."

"Graveyard trees!" exclaimed Walter; "what do you mean? I never heard of them before."

"I mean those trees which are generally planted, or found growing in graveyards; such as the yew, the cypress, and, perhaps, the sycamore.

" We have borrowed our custom of planting the CYPRESS in our graveyards and cemeteries from the Turks, who were probably led to select it as an ornament for the last resting-place of the dead from its dark, deep, and funereal foliage, which remains unchanged throughout the year. But the same custom prevailed among the Greeks and Romans, who also placed cypress twigs in the coffins of their dead, and suspended them about the portals of the house of mourning.



THE CYPRESS.

"The tree is a native of the Levant, the north of Africa, and the south of Europe, but, of late, has been successfully cultivated in England.

"Its wood is reddish or yellow; is hard, close of grain, and indestructible; it emits a fragrant smell, is very resinous, and defies the attacks of insects. It is supposed by some authorities to be the gopher wood of the Bible. As a proof of its durability, I may mention that the cypress-wood doors of St. Peter's Church at Rome, erected in the time of Constantine the Great, lasted until that of Pope Eugenius IV., or upwards of eleven centuries."

"Eleven centuries! Eleven hundred years! What a tremendously long time!"

"Yes; and even then they were perfectly sound, and only removed because the pope wished to substitute brazen doors.

"I pass on to the SYCAMORE, also called the Great Maple. This is not commonly met with in English graveyards, but on the Continent and in America it is often used. At all events, it is a noble tree, and well adapted, in my humble opinion, as a canopy for the 'slumbering dead.' It presents an almost unbroken mass of foliage, which for the greater part of the year is a glorious object. In spring it shines with rich, tender, glowing, and harmonious tints; in summer, the green is of a deep and intense shade; in autumn, there is an indescrib-

able warmth of tone in its brown and reddish colouring.

"The tree is very hardy, and from its stiff angular growth, and the strength of its spray, is able to

brave a northern climate, and even to defy the bitter blasts of the east. In the north of England, and in Scotland, therefore, it is a favourite tree; and in quiet graveyards, and in the avenues of many an old ancestral park, will be found of vener-



THE SYCAMORE.

able age and extraordinary proportions. In Mitford Park, Northumberland, a noble specimen exists, measuring, close to the ground, 22 feet in circumference, and 16 feet a little below the branches. One at Newbattle Abbey, near Edinburgh, measured 24 feet 4 inches at two feet and a half from the ground, and rose to a stature of 70 feet. There are sycamores still flourishing in this beautiful demesne which were planted before the Reformation. At Yester, in East Lothian, a sycamore, at one foot

from the ground, is 19 feet in circumference. And even in the south this fine and handsome tree attains to equally imposing dimensions. I have seen a specimen, in the delightful glades of Cobham Park, in Kent, which, close to the soil, boasts of a girth of 26 feet, and soars to the height of 94 feet."

"Ninety-four feet," exclaimed Walter; "let me see, what is the height of the Monument in London?"

- "About 200 feet."
- "Then, this sycamore is nearly half as high as the Monument? What a gigantic old fellow!"
- "Gigantic for its kind; but a mere dwarf, after all, if we compare it with the extraordinary Wellingtonias of California, some of which are said to be 300 feet high, or nearly as high as the cross on the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral!"
- "Oh yes," said Walter; "I have read about these monsters. A man on horseback can ride through the hollow trunk of one of them as it lies prostrate upon the ground."

"Having thus dismissed the cypress and the sycamore, I come to the tree which, of all trees, is the one most common to our English graveyards—I mean the YEW. By the way, a very noble specimen flourishes here in the New Forest; it stands on a small knoll near Boldre Church, partly encircled by a clear and rippling stream. It is centuries old, and prob-



SEQUOIA, OR GIANT TREE OF CALIFORNIA.

8 (249)

ably will live a century or two longer. Nothing can exceed its gloomy splendour, as its massy limbs, hung with grand loose foliage, spread abroad with a noble sweep to enclose the widest possible area of soil."

"I vote you take me to see this noble yew."

"Noble yews are plentiful enough in England,



THE YEW.

ay, and in Scotland, too; for the tree is a native of both countries. On Loch Lomond an island is almost entirely covered with them, and you can hardly conceive how sombre and impressive is the shade they cast.

But, to keep to our own country, and to localities within the reach of Londoners:—

"In Crowhurst Churchyard, Surrey, there is a hollow yew 30 feet 9 inches in girth at five feet from the ground, under whose spreading boughs a fair, or 'wake,' used to be held, and which is considered to be the largest in the county.

"In Albury Park, Surrey, grows a remarkable yew-tree hedge; the trunks of the trees composing it are bare for about eight or ten feet, and the tops

form one solid head of about ten feet in height, while the bottom branches spread out on each side of the row for about eight feet horizontally. The hedge is a quarter of a mile in length."

"And a jolly walk it must be, under its shade, Arthur; I should enjoy it on a hot afternoon like this,"

"A pleasant breeze blows up our leafy glade, Walter; I don't think you can feel the sultriness of the air to be intolerable. But to continue:—At Norbury, also in Surrey, flourishes a grove of yews which would move a poet's soul to ecstasy!"

"Oh, come, Arthur; you are growing poetical again!"

"In sober truth, it is a most magnificent and picturesque spectacle. Some of the trees are much rent and torn by time and weather; others are young, fresh, and vigorous; but all have assumed the most various and fantastic forms. They are distinguished by special names, such as the 'Fallen Giant,' the 'King of the Park,' and the 'Horse and his Rider.' One of them is 22 feet in circumference,

"There are two splendid yews in Hambledon Churchyard: one, quite sound, is 15 feet 5 inches in girth; the other, whose trunk is hollow, measures 27 feet.

"You will have read Gilbert White's delightful book, 'The Natural History of Selborne;' Selborne

being a quiet Hampshire village, where he lived and studied nature for many happy years. The church-yard contains a grand old yew, which White has described with much graphic force; if you are ever in the neighbourhood, visit the tree for the sake of the old naturalist, and its own solemn beauty.

"At Brabourne, in Kent, an enormous yew tree is, or was, according to De Candolle, 3000 years old."

"Three thousand years! Why, that carries us back to nearly twelve hundred years before the birth of our Saviour!"

"Yes; if the great French naturalist be correct, the Brabourne yew might have been a sapling when Solomon was building his famous Temple. It suffered much, however, from the pitiless hand of Time.

"It has been observed that the yews of the Kentish churchyards are frequently of a wonderful size and an exceeding old age; and it has been conjectured that they mark certain 'holy places' in the days of heathendom, which, after the introduction of Christianity, were befittingly consecrated by the erection of a church.

"The Crowhurst yew must not be omitted from this brief record of memorable trees. It stands in the churchyard, as it has stood for centuries, a noble and impressive memorial of the past, a suggestive monument to bygone generations; recalling, by the aspect of its hoary trunk and venerable branches, the days when Dane and Englishman contended for supremacy in the land—the fitful reign of Edward the Confessor—the terrible epoch of the Norman Conquest! It has seen the mailed knights and barons of the Plantagenet era; the gallants of Elizabeth's glorious court; the grave Roundhead and the gay Cavalier; the bewigged gentry of the reigns of the Georges; and it has lived to shelter men, women, and children who hail Victoria as Queen! Such a tree, Walter, is like a living epitome of English history."

"It seems wonderful that a mere tree should outlive so many, many generations of men, Arthur."

"And, at first sight, it seems humiliating: but the tree dies and perishes; man dies to live again, and live for ever.

"Now let me leave the fair counties of Kent, and Surrey, and Sussex, and fly, as the crow flies, due north. I must tell you, not of single yews, but of two celebrated groups of yews, which derive a peculiar interest from their associations.

"The first is a group of four, forming one of the most interesting objects in the beautiful valley of Borrowdale, near the lake of Derwent Water. Yews, however, and magnificent yews, are common enough in the lake districts of Westmoreland and Cumber-

land; and these would hardly have become famous had they not been seen, and admired, and sung by a great poet."

"Oh, I can guess the poet's name! Wordsworth?"

"Yes; they were favourite objects with the author of 'The Excursion,' and he therefore dedicated to them one of his most exquisite minor poems, which no cultivated mind can read without admiration:—

'Worthier still of note Are those fraternal four of Borrowdale, Joined in one solemn and capacious grove; Huge trunks!—and each particular trunk a growth Of intertwisted fibres serpentine Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved; Nor uninformed with phantasy, and looks That threaten the profane; a pillared shade, Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue, By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged Perennially; beneath whose sable roof Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked With unrejoicing berries, ghostly shapes May meet at noontide-Fear, and trembling Hope, Silence and Foresight, Death the skeleton, And Time the shadow—there to celebrate, As in a natural temple scattered o'er With altars, undisturbed, of mossy stone, United worship; or in mute repose To lie, and listen to the mountain flood Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.'

All the force, and beauty, and pathos of these lines you are too young to appreciate, Walter; but—"

"I can feel they are beautiful, Arthur!"

"I am sure you can; and, at all events, they

will serve to show you what emotions are awakened in a poet's soul by the sights and scenes of Nature; how much more is seen by the poetic eye in the shade of a single yew, than by the vision of ordinary observers. And it is in this spirit we should accustom ourselves to study the visible handiwork of God."

"But you were going to tell me," said Walter, after a pause, "of another celebrated group."

"Yes; of the ancient yews which still embellish the ruins of Fountains Abbey, in Yorkshire. They stand near the old abbey mill, and were probably, at one time, seven in number; for they are still called the Seven Sisters. Only three or four are now remaining, huge and hollow, but clothed in vigorous foliage. One of them is 25 feet in circumference, and they are calculated to be upwards of twelve centuries old. 'They have long outlived,' says Howitt, 'not only the magnificent abbey, but the religious system out of which it rose. Long may they continue to cast the spirit of long past ages over a scene which combines the ever-living forms of Nature so lovingly with the shattered remains of Mediæval Art, that together they seem rather a vision of poetry than a reality of this matterof-fact era.'

"But, Walter, I cannot dwell any longer on remarkable yews. My notes are so numerous that it would take me an hour to exhaust them. See, the

sun's rays are slanting in gold and crimson through the pillared avenues of the forest, and twilight will overtake us before we reach your mother's house."

"Was not the yew cultivated of old because its wood was excellent for making bows?"



ENGLISH ARCHERS.

"Yes; the bows with which the stout English archers won so many fields were fashioned out of the tough yew wood. Never was the fine old tree unwilling

'To furnish weapons for the bands
Of Umfraville or Percy, ere they marched
To Scotland's heaths; or those that crossed the sea
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poictiers.'

Every care was taken to promote its growth, and the exportation of its timber was prohibited by law.

"And now I shall finish my dissertation on the yew with a description of its botanical characters; after which we will quit the subject of graveyard trees, and hasten homeward.

"The common yew, then, is distinguished by its double ranked, linear, flat, and naked leaves. During its period of growth its outline, like that of other conifers, is conical or broadly pyramidal, the summit presenting a peaked or pointed appearance. Nor does it lose this form, or become round-headed, for many years; not, indeed, until it has attained its final growth, and the signs of decay in the topmost branches mark the period when it has passed maturity, a condition it does not generally arrive at before several centuries have been numbered.

"It grows with a stiff, erect stem, which is short in proportion to its bulk; and when not trimmed by the woodman's hand, throws off a number of nearly horizontal branches within a very short distance of the ground; these gradually grow longer, until they cover with their umbrageous spray a large space of ground. The trunk and larger branches are seldom seen perfectly round or smooth, but are deeply grooved lengthwise, and covered with a thin bark of a reddish-brown colour, which peels off in patches.

"The flowers are solitary; those of the male plant are a pale brown, and discharge an abundant yellowish-white dust, or pollen. The female flowers, green in colour, are not unlike a young acorn in shape. When ripe, the fruit consists of a scarlet berry, very sweet to the taste, though mawkish in flavour, of a glutinous consistency, open at the top, and enclosing a small brown, hard-shelled, oval seed or nut, which, though not surrounded by, is not immediately connected with, the fleshy cup.

"The yew seems to prefer a cool or northerly aspect, and a stiff, moist, calcareous soil.

"Here I pause. Come, cousin Walter, we have sat still long enough, and it is high time we were up and going. Your mamma will be waiting dinner for us."

"Well, Arthur, I declare I have not thought of the time; your talk is so jolly interesting. What a lot there is to be learned about these old trees, to be sure! Who would have thought it, to look at them? I promise you I shall always feel a very much greater respect for them, since I learned their importance."

As they wended their way homeward, the two cousins found a thousand subjects for conversation, as must always be the case with those who have eves to see and ears to hear, even in the dullest country lane, much more, then, in "leafy avenue" and "woodland glade." Flowers, and grasses, and ferns; insects and birds; the different varieties of soil; the rich colours of the foliage; the manifold aspects of the landscape; or, if you lift your gaze above the earth, the ever-changing outlines of the clouds, are inexhaustible themes for the heart and mind to deal with. What a wealth of secret associations is connected with them! What a vast world of imagery they open up! What pure and purifying reflections they suggest! It is one of the great debts which we owe to our poets that they have linked their brightest fancies and loftiest sentiments with every object in nature, so that it becomes impossible to look upon the lowliest wild-flower which blossoms in the shadow of the wayside hedge without some sweet melody recurring to the memory, and awakening a train of suggestive and elevating thought. Ah, what a boon has God given us in the beauties of the visible world! And yet how little they are appreciated—how little they are understood-by the great mass of mankind! Still less would they be understood but for the key to many of their noblest truths which the poets have provided. Poetry thus becomes the handmaid and interpreter of Nature, and it is well that the young should study the writings of our greater minstrels, if only because they will in this wise attain to a knowledge of, and a sympathy with, the deep woods, and the sunlit skies, and the sounding seas.

"What delightful perfume is this," exclaimed Walter, "which the wind wafts to my ol-fact-ory organs, as one of my masters persists in calling his nose!"

"Surely you recognize it," answered Arthur; "it comes from yonder hedge of sweet-briar, which has grown up around the hollow there, as if to provide a covert for particularly timid rabbits. Delightful it is, indeed, and worth all the perfumes on your mother's toilet-table, in which a certain young gentleman likes to dabble when he gets an opportunity."

"Well, I like sweet scents, Arthur, but I must confess I prefer this natural fragrance to all the compounds of Eugene Rimmel! And as a proof of my good taste I will ornament my button-hole with a spray. By-the-by, what is the other name for sweet-briar?"

"Rosa rubiginosa is the botanical name."

"No, I don't mean that; but the name which it bears in poetry. Eg—eg—"

"Oh, Eglantine. Yes; the name is as beautiful

as the perfume which the plant gives forth; and Chaucer tells us, speaking of this perfume, that

'The eglantine exhaled a breath
Whose odours were of power to raise from death.'



EGLANTINE, OR SWEET-BRIAR.

"Sweet-briar, let me tell you, is just a variety

of the dog-rose, whose delicate blossoms you may see blooming in yonder thicket. You know what the fruit of the dog-rose is called?"

"Oh yes, 'hips.' Very good eating they are, too!"

"If you take care to remove the bristle-like hairs that surround the seeds. Fond as you are of hips, you will be surprised to learn that in what are called 'the good old times' they were served up at the nobleman's table for dessert! Now-a-days they are chiefly used in medicine, being made into a conserve with sugar. What is called the trailing dogrose is supposed to have furnished the white flowers worn as an emblem by the partisans of the House of York in the famous but terrible wars of the White and Red Roses."

"That reminds me of a conversation I once had with mamma about historical flowers, as she called them. I remember she referred to the rose as one, and to the violet as another."

"Perhaps because the violet was chosen as a symbol of Napoleon's intended return from Elba in the spring of 1814. All his friends and soldiers—all who wished to see the great conqueror once more on the imperial throne of France—went about with violets in their button-holes, and, of course, by this simple sign easily recognized one another. As for the violet, I suppose no other flower has ever been

so praised and loved by the poets from the days of the Greeks down to our own more prosaic times. As Wordsworth says,—

'Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story.'

I fancy it must have been mentioned by almost every English poet, for in my common-place book I have a hundred quotations all referring to this exquisitely simple flower. In the days of the French troubadours, when floral games were held, and minstrels entered into competition with one another for the prize of song, the conqueror was rewarded with a golden violet, a significant proof of the high estimation in which the flower was held, and how it was regarded as associated with poetry and poets. I am half inclined to say with Scott,—

'The violet in her greenwood bower.

Where birchen boughs and hazels mingle,
May boast itself the fairest flower
In glen, or copse, or forest dingle.'"*

"Go on, Arthur; you may tell me something more about violets, if you can remember it. Have they any uses?"

* The highest eulogium ever passed on the viclet is Shakspeare's. He speaks of its blossom, in unequalled verse, as

"Sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes, Or Cytherea's breath."

My readers, when older, will feel all the beauty of these lines.

"Don't always talk about uses, Walter. To my mind, it is use enough for a flower to look beautiful and smell sweetly. Why are we to ask about everything which God has made, Is it useful? If it be not of any utility to man, it is certain to serve some purpose of its Maker in the great economy of the world's life. However, as far as violets are concerned, it is easy to answer the question. The petals, in the form of a syrup, are an excellent medicine for children. The roots are strongly emetic and purgative. And, finally, the flowers are of value as a colouring agent and a particularly agreeable but delicate perfume.

"The well-known Pansy, or Heart's-ease, is a



PANSY, OR HEART'S-EASE.

species of violet, and, as you know, a very beautiful and attractive species. Its common name 'pansy'

seems a corruption of the French word pensée, thought; and the French, when they offer this flower to one another, accompany it with the request, Pensez à moi, Think of me. It was known to our ancestors by a name which Shakspeare has immortalized, 'Love-in-Idleness.' The Greeks called it Phlox, 'a flame;' and the Italians, now-a-days, call it Flamala, or 'a little flame.' I prefer, however, its poetical appellation, Heart's-ease, which indeed appeals—as the poet says—

'To gentle feelings and affections kept Within the heart like gold.'"

"But, Arthur, we have wandered far away from your historical flowers. Now, there's Broom. Of course everybody knows that our old English kings were called 'Plantagenet' from the yellow broom—

Planta genista (you see I don't forget my Latin)."

"Yes; the common story runs that the name was assumed by Geoffrey, Earl of Anjou, husband of the haughty Empress Matilda, because he wore a sprig of broom in his helmet in one of his numerous battles. Another flower, worth mentioning in this connection, is the Forget-me-Not, which was adopted by Henry of Lancaster at the period of his exile, and interwoven by him with the initial letters of his watchword, Souveigne vous de moi ('Remember me'). The lily, used as an emblem by the Bourbon kings of France; the rose of England; the thistle

of Scotland; the four-leaved shamrock of Ireland;—all these may be regarded as historical flowers or plants. Remembering these facts, you will recognize the truth and grace of Longfellow's poem upon 'Flowers,' which I recommend you to read on our return home."*

The two cousins now for a time continued their walk in silence; Walter endeavouring to recollect and put together all the information poured out

- * For the convenience of our young friends, we subjoin a portion of the poem to which Arthur Somerville alludes:—
 - "Everywhere about us are they glowing, Some like stars, to tell us Spring is born; Others, their blue eyes with tears o'erflowing, Stand like Ruth amid the golden corn;
 - "Not alone in Spring's armorial bearing,
 And in Summer's green emblazoned field;
 But in arms of brave old Autumn's wearing,
 In the centre of his brasen shield;
 - "Not alone in meadows and green alleys,
 On the mountain top, and by the brink
 Of sequestered pools in woodland valleys,
 Where the slaves of Nature stoop to drink;
 - "Not alone in her vast dome of glory, Not on graves of bird and beast alone; But in old cathedrals, high and hoary, On the tombs of heroes, carved in stone;
 - "In the cottage of the rudest peasant, In ancestral homes, whose crumbling towers, Speaking of the Past unto the Present, Tell us of the ancient Games of Flowers;
 - "In all places, then, and in all seasons,
 Flowers expand their light and soul-like wings,
 Teaching us, by most persuasive reasons,
 How akin they are to human things.
 - "And with childlike, credulous affection We behold their tender buds expand; Emblems of our own great resurrection, Emblems of the bright and better land."

from his cousin's well-stored mind; Arthur lost in admiration of the scene around him; one of those scenes common enough, not only in the New Forest, but in every wooded district in "merry England." The trees wove their branches together overhead, so as to form a complete canopy of leafiness; the turf under foot was green with a fresh, cool, and



seemingly unchangeable greenness, and exhaled, when trodden upon, a peculiar but most delightful aromatic odour; every dell, and copse, and thicket shone with the light of flowers, and echoed with the song of birds; and the music which floated through the air was intensified, so to speak, by the

grave bass, now swelling and now sinking, which a neighbouring streamlet contributed to swell the harmony.

How widely different the character of an English wood from that of a tropical forest! Rich as the former is in beauty, and abundant as it is in vegetation, a certain degree of orderliness, as it were, may everywhere be recognized. The leafy growth is full and copious, but never degenerates into rank luxuriance. But in the tropical forest Nature seems to run riot with excess of strength; it is the very extravagance of vigour, the absolute waste and prodigality of beauty. "No description," says Dr. Chaplin Child, "no description can adequately portray the profusion of tropical vegetation especially met with in the jungles and in the recesses of the primeval forest, where the surface of the earth is literally packed with the abundance of its own richness. Through obstacles like these the serpent may creep, or the wild beast, sheathed in the armour of its thick fur, may force a passage, but man must cut out his way with the hatchet in his hand. On either side of the lane thus driven through, vegetation, tangled and compressed by plant growing upon plant, builds itself up like a wall. The density of the leafage overhead is in perfect keeping with the requirements of such climates. Strong, protecting coverings are necessary to intercept and absorb the



A TROPICAL FOREST AND RIVER.

fierce ravs of the sun, and shield the surface of the earth from their scorching touch; they are needed, also, to break the fall of the deluge which pours down like a waterspout from southern skies. blackness of the shade may be measured by contrast with the vivid points and lines of dazzling light which here and there pierce through the chinks of the leafy canopy. The course of a river forcing its way through the dense South American jungle seems hewn out of the woody mass; there are no shelving banks, and the forest wall itself dips sheer into the 'In descending the streams between the stream. Orinoco and the Amazon,' says Humboldt, 'we often tried to land, but without being able to step out of the boat. Towards sunset we sailed along the bank for an hour to discover, not an opening, since none exists, but a spot less wooded, where our Indians, by means of the hatchet and manual labour, would gain space enough for a resting-place for twelve or thirteen persons."

There must be something extremely captivating, as Dr. Child remarks, both to the eye and the imagination in tropical scenery. All travellers speak of it in enthusiastic language, and with that lingering affection in which memory embalms only a few of the places one visits in a lifetime. Thus, of the landscapes around the cities of Brazil, Dr. Darwin writes:—

"While quietly walking along the shady pathways, and admiring each successive view, I wished to find language to express my ideas. Epithet after epithet was found too weak to convey to those who have not visited the intertropical regions the sensation of delight which the mind experiences. said that the plants in a hothouse fail to communicate a just idea of the vegetation, yet I must recur to it. The land is one great wild, untidy, luxuriant hothouse, made by nature herself, but taken possession of by man, who has studded it with gay houses and formal gardens. How great would be the desire in any admirer of nature to behold, if such were possible, the scenery of another planet! Yet to any person in Europe it may be truly said that, at the distance of only a few degrees from his native soil, the glories of another world are opened to him, In my last walk I stopped again and again to gaze on these beauties, and endeavoured to fix in my mind for ever an impression which at the time I knew must sooner or later fail. The form of the orange-tree, the cocoa-nut, the palm, the mango, the fern-tree, the banana, will remain clear and separate; but the thousand beauties which unite them into one perfect scene must fade away; yet they will leave, like a tale told in childhood, a picture full of indistinct but most beautiful figures."

If we now turn to the North American forest, we

meet with another surprising contrast; a picture as remarkable for the sombreness of its colouring and the rudeness of its outlines, as that of the tropical forest is for richly glowing hues and exquisitely graceful forms. The prevailing character of the North American forest is a certain gloomy majesty; Nature there puts on her darker robes, and invests herself with her sterner attributes. Our limits preclude us from dwelling on these points; but the following extract from Milton and Cheadle's narrative of their "North-West Passage by Land," will afford the reader an impressive idea of the general physiognomy of the region we refer to:—

"No one," say our authors, "who has not seen a primeval forest, where trees of gigantic size have grown and fallen undisturbed for ages, can form any idea of the collection of timber, or the impenetrable character of such a wilderness. There were pines and thujas of every size, the patriarch of 300 feet in height standing alone, or thickly clustering groups of young ones struggling for the vacant place of some prostrate giant. The fallen trees lay piled around, forming barriers often six or eight feet high on every side: trunks of huge cedars, mossgrown and decayed, lay half-buried in the ground on which others as mighty had recently fallen; trees still green and living, recently blown down, blocking the view with the walls of earth held in



A NORTH AMERICAN FOREST.

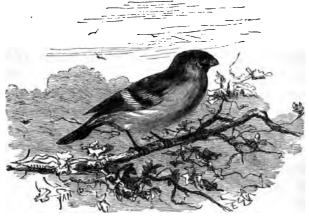
their matted roots; living trunks, dead trunks, rotten trunks; dry, barkless trunks, and trunks moist and green with moss; bare trunks and trunks

with branches — prostrate, reclining, horizontal, propped up at different angles; timber of every size, in every stage of growth and decay, in every possible position, entangled in every possible combination. The swampy ground was densely covered with American dog-wood, and elsewhere with thickets of the araba, a tough-stemmed trailer, with leaves as large as those of the rhubarb plant, and growing in many places as high as our shoulders. Both stem and leaves are covered with sharp spines, which pierced our clothes as we forced our way through the tangled growth, and made the legs and hands of pioneers scarlet from the inflammation of myriads of punctures."

From North American wildernesses and Tropical jungles we now return to the quiet scenery of the New Forest, through whose pleasant shades Walter and his cousin were leisurely strolling homeward. Walter's attention having been arrested by the sight of a bullfinch, perched on the bough of a green old elm, he must needs turn to his "Cyclopædia," as he laughingly called his cousin, for information respecting a bird which is not too common in Hampshire. Like the hawfinch and the chaffinch he loves the leafy recesses of woods and the deep shade of patrician trees.

"The bullfinch," said Arthur, "is, as you see, a

bird of somewhat clumsy form, but the outline of his head is fine, and his eye is bright and keen as that of a raven's. He has a very strong bill, which



THE BULLFINCH.

enables him to provide himself very easily with his favourite food—berries, fruit, and young buds. His plumage is handsome; the head and part of the throat are of a rich velvety black; the upper parts of the body deep gray; the wings and tail black, shaded with iron blue; the under parts of the body of a fine vermilion, merging into white towards the tail. The female, however, wears a somewhat less modest attire."*

^{*} As is hinted by Bishop Mant:-

[&]quot;Deep in the thorn's entangled maze, The dusky bullfinch plans her seat: There, where you see the clustered boughs Put forth the opening bud, her spouse

"Hark! Arthur, he is going to sing."

"He does not sing often after midsummer, I think; and his song, as you can judge for yourself, is neither powerful nor varied. The curious thing is, however, that, when tamed, he exhibits a remarkable faculty for learning tunes, and in Germany large numbers of bullfinches are trained for this purpose."

"Isn't he a sad fellow for stealing fruit? I have heard the gardener speak of him in terms more forcible than polite."

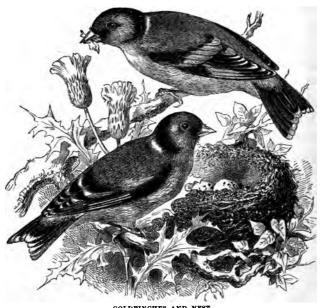
"That shows the gardener's ignorance. He eats the buds of the fruit trees, it is true, but then it is only the rotten buds, or the buds infested with insects, which he attacks; and thus, instead of doing harm, he effects an incalculable amount of good. And, in fact, were it not for our small birds, we should be overrun with a plague of insects, which would eat up our grain crops and our fruit, and destroy every green thing on the face of the earth. It is much to be regretted that our farmers and gardeners are so often unaware of the debt of gratitude for service rendered which they owe to the very birds they abuse, and which they seem desirous to exterminate."

With mantle gray, and jet-like head, And flaming breast of crimson red, Is perched, with hard and hawk-like beak, Intent the embryo fruit to seek."

"I don't think the bullfinch the prettiest of the finch family. Do you, Arthur?"

"Decidedly not; I give the preference to the delicate, lovable, fairy-like little goldfinch."

"What a beautiful nest the goldfinch builds! found one, a few days ago, in the hedge at the bottom of our garden; but I left it undisturbed."



GOLDFINCHES AND NEST.

"It is a very miracle of architecture, Walter! How he contrives to work out so neat and elegant a structure, with moss, and down, and grass, and lichens, so that not a twig or leaf shall project, but all be as smooth and round as a ball, it puzzles the mind of man to conceive! And then it is so airily light that it rocks like a cradle to every breeze! I declare that I never look at a goldfinch's nest without feelings of admiration which almost amount to enthusiasm."

"He is a clever little fellow, Master Goldie! And then, too, he is very useful, for he helps to keep down the troublesome thistles."

"And not only thistles, but chickweed, and groundsel, and dandelion, which would otherwise spread far and wide over every field. It is said that each bird eats a hundred seeds every day; that is, he prevents in a year the growth of 36,500 weeds. Think how many finches there must be in Great Britain, and you may form some slight idea of



CHAFFINCH.

ever, like the rest of his family, a bird of the forest and the orchard; his nest is nearly as

the incalculable benefit which those birds annually confer upon our British farmers"

"What do you say of the chaffinch?"

"Well, Walter, we are now so near home, that I cannot do him justice. He is, how-family, a bird of the his nest is nearly as

elegant a structure as that of the goldfinch, while his song is fuller and sweeter than that of the bull-finch. You should be told—for perhaps you do not know—that the chaffinch never sings when on the wing, but warbles incessantly among the trees and on the blooming hedge-rows, from the early part of February to the second week in July, and then his song entirely ceases. You may hear the lark, and the robin, and the wren, and the thrush during the winter, but never a note of melody from the silent chaffinch; only a shrill and peculiar note of call.

"It is in spring time and summer time, when our fields and lanes are bright with flowers, and our sky is alive with sunshine, that the birds pour forth their gladdest and fullest music. Let us enjoy it while we can, dear Walter, and be thankful to Him who has provided us with so exquisite a source of enjoyment."

"Hark! how the cheerful birds do chant their lays,
And carol of love's praise.

The merry lark her matins sings aloft;
The thrush replies; the mavis descant plays;
The ouzel shrills; the redbreast warbles soft;
So goodly all agree, with sweet consent
To this day's merriment."—SPENSEE.





CHAPTER VIII.

COMMON TREES.

As a willow keeps
A patient watch over the stream that creeps
Willingly by it.—Keats.

Hard by a poplar shook alway, All silver-green with gnarled bark.—TENNYSON.

Delaying, as the tender ash delays, To clothe herself, when all the woods are green.—TENNYSON.

The heavy-headed plane tree, by whose shade
The grass grows thickest, men are fresher made....
The walnut, loving vales....
The maple, ash, that do delight in fountains,
Which have their currents by the sides of mountains.

WILLIAM BROWNE.

URRAH, Arthur! We are all going off to the Isle of Wight to-morrow! Mamma has taken a house at Ryde; oh, won't we go fishing and boating, and won't we touch up our natural history again! You'll find that I have not forgotten about seanemones, and sea-urchins, and mussels, and limpets,

and all the other wonders of the deep and the shore."

"I don't think you have. Your memory is tenacious enough, if you only consent to exercise it. But as we start to-morrow, I think we had better take another forest walk this morning, and finish up our talk about the trees. Had we stayed in this neighbourhood longer, I intended to have given you another lesson or two upon the ferns and wild-flowers. But your mother's health requires a brisker air, and the ferns and flowers you can study at your own pleasure."

"Let us keep towards Christchurch, Arthur, and we shall get some fine glimpses of the sea. Oh, I love the sea much more warmly than the forest!"

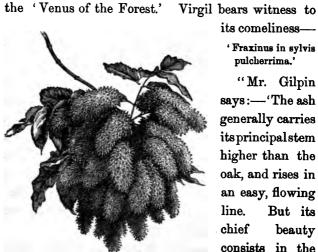
"Each has its particular claims upon our admiration, and I don't recognize any necessity of underrating the one in favour of the other. But let us return to our trees. To make our sketches of them tolerably complete, I find I must include the Ash, the Walnut, the Plane, the Poplar, the Willow, the Elder, and the Larch. Even then I leave out several which I would fain have mentioned, such as the Acacia, the White Thorn, the Wild Cherry, the Alder, the Hornbeam, and the Laurel; but these are of less importance, and I must leave them to your own careful examination.

"The ASH has one curious characteristic—it is the

last to put on, and the first to throw off, its leaves. These leaves are of a bright fresh green, and are



THE ASH.



FLOWERS OF THE ASH.

arranged in masses, which hang loose and free, like a maiden's drapery. is one of the most beautiful of trees: so light is its foliage, so flowing is the outline of its stem and branches; and I do not think any other can venture to dispute with it the flattering title of

its comeliness-

'Fraxinus in sylvis pulcherrima.'

"Mr. Gilpin says:--'The ash generally carries itsprincipalstem higher than the oak, and rises in an easy, flowing line. But its chief beauty consists in the lightness of its

whole appearance. Its branches at first keep close to the trunk, and form acute angles with it: but as they begin to lengthen, they generally take an easy sweep; and the looseness of the leaves corresponding with the lightness of the spray, the whole forms an elegant depending foliage.' In fact, the only fault in the ash is the rapidity with which it sheds its leaves, so that it becomes bare while other trees are still rich in greenery, like a prodigal who has ran through all his estate."

"Is not the wood of the ash much valued, Arthur? I have heard a good deal of stout ashen poles."

"Yes; its toughness and elasticity are two very valuable qualities; so that it is much used for boatoars, the handles of spades, shovels, and axes—"

"Oh yes; and for cricket-bats-"

"In the manufacture of boxes and work-tables, and in building carriages. Some strange superstitions were formerly connected with the ash. For instance: a hole was bored in an ash-tree, and a living shrew-mouse inclosed in the hole. The branch of a tree which had undergone this operation was supposed to cure lameness and cramp in cattle."

"Oh, my! To think that people would ever believe such rubbish!"

"A beautiful variety of this tree is the Rowan or Mountain Ash,—

'How clung the rowan to the rock, And through the foliage showed his hoad With narrow leaves and berries red.'

In ancient days, when nearly every natural object was associated with some wild superstition, the graceful, shapely rowan was regarded with special veneration. Frequently, even to the present day, a stump of it will be found in some old British burial-place, or near the stone-circle of a Druid temple, which it formerly hallowed with its sacred In the Scottish Highlands, and in Wales, shade. a branch of it is often hung up over doorways, and in stables and byres, to avert the supposed influence of witches and warlocks. But I will read to you an account of a still more absurd belief which once prevailed in connection with the ash. It is borrowed from the Gentleman's Magazine for October 1809:---

"'Thomas Chillingworth, son of a farmer at Shirley Heath, near Birmingham, was, when an infant of a year old, passed through a gap or rupture in an ash-tree, now perfectly sound, which he preserves with so much care that he will not suffer a single branch to be touched, for it is believed the life of the patient depends on the life of the tree; and the moment that is cut down, be the patient ever so distant, the rupture returns, and a mortification ensues."

"Oh, what nonsense! We are wiser now-a-days than to believe such rubbish, Arthur."

"Perhaps we are; but even now-a-days people believe a great deal which they ought not to believe. But here is another extract:—

"'Speaking one day to an old woman, a native of Worcestershire, she furnished me with the following infallible recipe for the cure of ague:—"Of course you know what a maiden ash-tree is. Well, if you are troubled with the ague, you go to a grafter of trees, and tell him your complaint (every grafter notices the first branch of a maiden ash). You must not give him any money, or there will be no cure. You go home, and in your absence the grafter cuts the first branch." Upon this I asked her, "How long it was before the patient felt any relief?" "Relief," said the old lady; "why, he is cured that instant that the branch is cut from the tree!"'"

"I never heard of such rubbish before, Arthur."

"Well, here is a third extract:-

"'A friend in Wiltshire reminds me of some lines regarding the ash. It was once the practice, and in some obscure places may be so now, to pluck the leaf in every case where the leaflets were of equal number, and to say,—

^{&#}x27; Even-ash, I thee do pluck, Hoping thus to meet good luck.

If no luck I get from thee, I shall wish I'd left thee on the tree."

So much for the ash, and its legends."

"Take the POPLAR next, Arthur. I have always had a fancy for that tall, monument-like tree, which so often flourishes in our hedge-rows."

"Perhaps you are not aware that the pretty, delicate Aspen, with its leaves which quiver at the



THE ASPEN.

lightest breath of air,* is a species of poplar (Populus tremula). There was once afloat a superstitious notice that our Saviour's cross was made of the wood of the aspen. and hence arose the tremulous motion of its foliage, as if the tree shuddered at the guilty deed in which it had innocently shared. The poplar, however,

which you just now alluded, and which is so often planted in long monotonous rows, is the Lombardy Poplar. It has been introduced into England from

^{* &}quot;O woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made."—Sir W. Scott.

the banks of the Po, where it forms the most unpicturesque lines, stretching in unbroken regularity for miles upon miles.

Another kind of poplar, superior in effect, and of a more beautiful form, is the Abele, or Great White Poplar (Populus Alba), a native of Great Britain. It is easily recognized by its leaves, which have a dark-green upper surface, but are



THE POPLAR.

white and woolly underneath. When the wind plays among them, the air seems to ripple with flakes of silver.

"I must not omit to mention one valuable quality of the wood of the poplar; it is very slow to take fire; and even when ignited, burns in a reluctant, smouldering manner."

"I'll try," interrupted Walter, "to remember so useful a fact, and when I build a house for myself, I'll have all the floors and partitions made of poplar wood."

"I come next," continued Arthur, "to the Planes: handsome, leafy, dignified trees, which always enhance the beauty and richness of a landscape; trees

with massive trunks and broadly-spreading crests; with bold free foliage and with luxuriant branches; trees frequently attaining to a considerable girth and a majestic stature; and always impressing the beholder with a sense of power and vigour.

"There are two principal varieties:-

"The Oriental Plane (Platanus Orientalis), a native of Greece, Persia, Levant, and Asia Minor: and—

"The Western Plane (Platanus Occidentalis), which is distributed over a great portion of the North American Continent."

"What is the difference between them? How can you tell one from the other?" inquired Walter.

"The leaves of the Oriental are much smaller



THE PLANE.

and much more deeply indented or lobed than those of the Western. The leafstalks in the former are green; in the latter, a purplish-red. The fruit of the Western plane is larger than that of the Eastern; it is a taller tree, with a bulkier stem. In England Western plane-trees

are to be met with, 100 and 120 feet in height; in America, they tower to 150, and are sometimes

14 to 16 feet in diameter. In point of majesty of appearance, both trees are about equal. Oriental plane, however, can lay claim to classical associations which invest it with a certain superiority of interest. Thus, Herodotus tells us of an enormous tree which so delighted Xerxes, when he invaded Greece, by its loftiness of stature and unparalleled breadth of shade, that he encircled it with a collar of gold. Another plane, remarkable for its beauty and its colossal proportions, grew in Arcadia, and was said to have been planted by Menelaus. When Pausanias saw it, this tree was reputed to be 1300 years old. Pliny speaks of a plane-tree in Lycia, which was in itself a perfect forest. In the hollow of its gigantic trunk the Roman governor, Licinius Mucianus, accompanied by eighteen of his attendants, enjoyed a repast. An enormous plane, at Buyukdere, which was visited by Dr. Walsh in 1831, measured 141 feet in circumference."

"What a monster!" exclaimed Walter; "I am sure that was a forest in itself. Why, to walk round it forty or fifty times would be a day's exercise!"

"Well, the plane is remarkable, then, for beauty, dignity, and magnitude. On the other hand, its fruit is not edible, and its timber is of little value. The tree I shall next speak of is less distinguished for beauty and magnitude; but it bears a delicious

fruit, and its wood is singularly handsome. I refer to the Walnur."

"The walnut for ever," cried Walter; "don't I like walnuts, pickled or unpickled! And then, its wood. Oh, what a fine grain it has, and what a rich dark colour!"

"'Walnut-trees,' as Evelyn says, in his old-fashioned style, 'render most graceful avenues to



THE WALNUT.

our country dwellings, and do excellently in hedge-rows. The Bergstrass, or road extending from Heidelberg to Darmstadt, is all planted with walnuts; for, as by an ancient law, the Borderers were obliged to nurse up and take care of

them, and that chiefly for their ornament and shade, so a man may ride for many miles about that country under a continued arbour or close walk — the traveller refreshed with both the fruit and the shade. In several places in Germany no young farmer is permitted to marry a wife, till he bring proof that he has planted, and is owner of, a certain number of walnut-trees.'"

"That shows how the Germans valued them."

"Yes; and I wish the walnut was more commonly planted in Great Britain. It is an imposing and a picturesque tree, with thick spreading limbs and luxuriant foliage. Its great disadvantage is, that it does not grow well in a plantation or grove, but requires to be cultivated singly, or planted at intervals of from thirty to forty feet. Its roots are enormous, and penetrate to a great depth."

"The walnut is not one of our native trees, is it?"

"No; like the peach and apricot, it comes from Persia. I don't know who introduced it into England. At all events, it had not the honour, like the weeping willow, of being first planted here by a poet's hands."

"What! Do we owe our weeping willows to a poet?"

"It is said that the first was cultivated by Pope, in the grounds of his villa at Twickenham, under the following circumstances:—The poet having received a present of figs from Turkey, observed that one twig of the basket in which they were packed was putting out a shoot. He immediately planted it in his garden, and it soon became a fine tree, from which stock all the weeping willows in England have come."

"A pretty story," said Walter.

"Too pretty, perhaps, to be true. It is certain that many species of the willow have been known in England for centuries. Does not Shakspeare, in his 'Hamlet,' describe a willow growing—

'Aslant a brook,
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream?'

The willow here alluded to will probably be the White, or Common Huntingdon Willow, whose



THE WILLOW.

silvery and plume-like foliage, as it droops over a wimpling burn or a crystal pool, lends an indescribable grace and charm to the scene. All the willows love the vicinity of streams and rivers. You will remember that beautiful passage in the Psalms?

— 'By the waters of

Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion! As for our harps, we hanged them upon the willow-trees.'

"Let me enumerate the principal varieties of this extensive tribe which grow in Great Britain: first, the Salix Babylonica, or Weeping Willow; second, Salix Fragilis, Crack, or Red-Wood Willow; third, Salix Russelliana, Duke of Bedford's Willow;

fourth, Salix Alba, White or Common Huntingdon Willow; and fifth, Salix Caprea, Goat-Willow, or Saugh.

"Closely related to the willow in nature, though not in form, is the ALDER, which, like the willow,

loves the quiet river-valleys and the neighbourhood of tranquil pools. As a tree, it is more picturesque than any of the willows, except the weeping. Though objections have been made to the deep and dusky green of its foliage, as investing it with too melancholy a



THE ALDER.

character, yet, as I have read, it is this which enhances its interest and gives it individuality; and even if its colouring be less pleasing than lighter and livelier tints, the defect, if it be one, is compensated by the retention of its leaves to a very late period of the year, as it is frequently quite green long after the other trees of the forest have become entirely denuded. Besides, we require trees like the alder to give depth and intensity to a land-scape, just as a piece of music would be monotonous without its chromatic modulations, and a summer sky unpleasing without an occasional cloud."

"You mentioned one other tree, Arthur, as requiring a word or two of description. Let me see —oh yes! it was the Larch."

"Of the LARCH I need not say much, though it is a useful, and by no means an unromantic, tree.



CORSICAN PINE (Larch).

It is a species of link between the deciduous or the leaf-shedding trees, and the evergreens. Like the former. it throws off its foliage yearly; like the latter. it bears a cone. is resinous, and has a similar mode of ramification. Its native country is in the Alps and Apennines; and in Great Britain it thrives best in breezy, elevated districts.

where it grows rapidly, and to a great height. Its

rosy catkins appear in April, at which time the tree presents a grateful object to the painter's eye.

"And now, Walter, we will finish our ramble in the Forest and our talk about the Trees simultaneously. What I have told you is necessarily the merest superficial introduction to a right study of forest vegetation; yet I hope it will be enough to induce you to direct your attention to the subject, with a view of mastering its more important points."

"But I have so much to learn, Arthur; I can never accomplish it all!"

"Not at once, assuredly, but by degrees you can, and will. Do you remember how Luther, while leading a life of the utmost activity, contrived to complete his translation of the Bible? By doing a bit of it daily. His motto was, 'Nulla dies sine lineâ,'-Not a day without a line! And in like manner I would say to you, Not a day without a fact. Every day that you have not added something to your stock of knowledge, say of it, like the Roman Emperor, Perdidi diem-I have lost a day. But, above all, cultivate the habit of close observation. When you walk abroad, keep your eyes open. For instance, in strolling through a wood or plantation, note the different shapes and qualities of the leaves, the peculiarities of the bark, the properties and specific distinctions of flower or fruit. Note in what respects the trees resemble,



or differ from, one another. Lose no opportunity of acquiring information as to their value; be sure to observe in what way they affect the character of the landscape. By such means as these, you will imperceptibly gather up a precious and abundant store of knowledge, which will prove to you a source of infinite delight; and, it may be, of inestimable utility. Knowledge is accumulated power, and God, in His own good time, will teach you how to turn that power to the best account."

